Hafa Adai!

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Ogo bill tightens tax collection for B&Bs. PAGE 3

$1

IPI fails to pay $62M by deadline

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Commonwealth Casino Commission board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero confers with the board's legal counsel, assistant attorney general Carl Dela Cruz, during the board's regular monthly meeting at the Springs Plaza in Gualo Rai last Thursday.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Troubled Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC failed to pay some $62 million in casino license fees it owes the CNMI government by last Saturday's deadline.

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MPLT trustees file complaint vs. DPL before OAG and OPA

» For DPL's alleged fraud/waste, abuse of public land lease funds, other violations

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Torres

The trustees of the Marianas Public Land Trust have filed a formal complaint and request for investigation/audit with the Office of the Attorney

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Yeom temporarily reinstated as CCC executive director

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Casino Commission board confirmed on Thursday the temporary re-appointment of Andrew Yeom as the CCC executive director. Due to its limited funding, though, Yeom's temporary appointment is only for two months or until the end of February 2024.

CCC board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero said Yeom has to focus on wrapping up

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FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director Andrew Yeom.

At stroke of midnight, New Year gives clean slate for long-elusive resolutions

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and DANIEL KOZIN
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP)—It's an annual end-of-year exercise in futility for many. But a clean slate awaits at the stroke of midnight for the next round of resolutions.

From the first spray of fire-

See NEW Year on Page 4

AP

2024 glasses are displayed ahead of New Year's Eve in Times Square, Friday, Dec. 29, 2023, in New York.

INSIDE

BUSINESS

Retiree David Blake is now the proud owner of a 24-inch Apple iMac after winning the grand prize of Saipan Computer Services' Customer Appreciation Raffle Promo.

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NATION

Over the past three years, the world's oldest democracy has been tested in ways not seen in decades.

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WORLD

Israeli strikes in central Gaza killed at least 35 people Sunday, hospital officials said.

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SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

Happy 67th birthday Malou Balaaldia, fifth from left. Greetings from your family, loved ones, and friends on Saipan.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/

2024
HAPPY NEW YEAR
As we reflect on the past year and ring in the new, we thank you for letting us be a part of your financial journey.
This past year, we've witnessed your unwavering resilience, celebrated some of your life's biggest milestones, and stood with you through challenges and triumphs. It's been our honor to serve you.
For 2024, let's give a little love and continue to be inspired by one another. Wishing you good health, new friendships and more memorable moments.
From our Familia to yours,
Happy New Year!
Bank of Guam
Member FDIC

Falling fuel prices result in lower FAC rate—CUC

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has been notified by Mobil Oil Mariana Islands, Inc. that there has been a decrease in the average international fuel oil prices which may affect the Fuel Adjustment Charge.

Pursuant to an order previously issued by the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, CUC is required to adjust (increase or decrease) the FAC pass-through rate when the Mean of Platts Singapore monthly pricing equals or exceeds a 4.5% differential of the average per gallon cost of fuel used in the calculation of the current FAC rate.

As a result, the current FAC rate will decrease by $0.01796 from $0.26690 per kWh to $0.24894 per kWh effective Jan. 1, 2024.

The FAC is one of two components that make up the CUC electric rate, which is strictly for fuel-related purchases. The second component is the CUC base rate, which is used to fund operations, projects, debt services, or any non-fuel related expenses. This base rate has not increase since April 2014. ***(CUC)***

Guam PACT Act registration and community call on Jan. 27, 28

HAGATNA, Guam—On Jan. 27 and 28, 2024 there will be a PACT Act registration and community call where VA health care professionals will be available to share information and resources with veterans.

The event will be from 10am to 6pm in the Agana Shopping Center at 302 South Route 4, Rectangular Court & Rm 223 (2nd floor), Hagåtña, GU 96910. Veterans who are already enrolled may also come for diabetic foot checks, blood pressure checks, as well as health and benefits questions.

The PACT Act is a historic new law that will help VA deliver for millions of veterans—and their spouses or survivors—by empowering us to presumptively provide care and benefits to Veterans suffering from more than 20 toxic exposure-related conditions. It will also bring generations of men and women who have served into VA health care, which will improve veteran health outcomes across the board.

The PACT Act is being implemented now to deliver care and services for toxic-exposed veterans and their survivors. If you think you might be eligible for PACT Act benefits, here's what you need to know:

- You can apply for PACT Act-related benefits now by filing a claim.
- You can learn more about the PACT Act by visiting VA.gov/PACT or calling 1-800-MY-VA-411

"We are excited to offer PACT Act enrollment and health services to our veterans," said Dr. Adam Robinson, director VA Pacific Islands Health Care System. "If you aren't sure if you are eligible for VA services, please come and see us. We'll help you access the benefits that you have earned and deserve."

VA Pacific Islands Health Care System will continue to make PACT Act enrollment a priority, as well as other community outreach events from those who are unable to come to one of our locations. For more information regarding VA health care in the Pacific call: 1-800-698-2411. ***(PR)***

Ogo bill tightens tax collection for B&Bs

Rep. Julie A. Ogo (Ind-Rota) has introduced a bill that clarifies and codifies the meaning of the terms "short-term accommodations" and "transient accommodation" to ensure the proper collection of taxes from bed-and-breakfast facilities in the CNMI. She touts this as a revenue-generating measure that avoids raising taxes further.

Ogo says her bill, House Bill 23-93, is needed to facilitate efficient enforcement of the laws and regulations by providing the mechanisms and tools for the government agencies to audit and inspect facilities and their operations.

Ogo

"The Department of Finance and the Zoning Board need to make sure that properties for B&B operations are not disguised as house or residential rentals," Ogo said.

The bill defines "short-term accommodations" as any hotel, motel, house, and apartel (apartment hotel) facility or owners of hotels, motels, apartels, houses—the whole house or a room in a house—, condominium and apartment units, or property that offers temporary accommodations or lodgings for a set fee and the length of stay of a guest(s) does not exceed 360 days.

It also defines "transient accommodation" as a short-term accommodation, lodging, or living accommodation of any kind, "for a set daily, nightly, weekly, or monthly fee multiplied by the length of stay, not exceeding 360 days, that a guest(s) rents in the Commonwealth.

The proposed bill also provides that all online and local platforms where "transient accommodations" are advertised, provide booking, and payment collection services are required to register with the Department of Finance to be certified for a fee through their local clients before engaging in an agreement to host bookings, payment service, and advertisements.

These hosting platforms will be required to file separate supporting records indicating their names, registration certificate numbers, names and addresses of local operators and booking data at the end of each Business Gross Tax Return cycle to be filed as a supporting document to the Hotel Occupancy Tax filing.

This will assist the Department of Finance in their auditing effort by giving them an edge to cross check and verify reported income of local operators on Business Gross Revenue filing, she added.

"We have been receiving inconsistent revenue reporting from the Department of Finance on B&B operations and many of the B&B clients have also been reporting that they were never charged Hotel Occupancy Tax. Therefore we need to do everything we can to give our regulatory

See OGO on Page 4

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*On approved credit (OAC). Some conditions apply. Doc fees and registration not included. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Vehicles may not be exactly as shown. See dealer for more details. Maximum credit card payment toward vehicle purchase is $2,500. 2023 Mazda CX-5 Sport total price is $25,995 less 20% down payment. Financed at 9.29% APR for 72 monthly payments of $377.88 or $174.12 per paycheck based on 26 pay periods per year. Total deferred price is $32,664.51.

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PABX Telephone System Installer
Tel: (670) 234-8895 | Email: armatech.saipan@gmail.com
Mobile: (670) 287-5525 / (670) 783-8895

Woman alleges Karidat violently evicted her

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A woman has filed a civil lawsuit against Karidat Social Services, alleging she was violently evicted from the organization's women's shelter, Guma Esperansa.

Zhou Peirong filed the civil lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the NMI, alleging she and her son was violently evicted from the Guma Esperansa on June 8, 2021, when Karidat gathered her belongings in a trash bag and threw them out.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona granted Zhou's *in forma pauperis* application, meaning she can proceed with her suit at no cost to her. The court did, however, dismiss the complaint but allowed her to amend it so she could justify why the federal court has jurisdiction over her case.

According to the complaint, Zhou and her son had been at the Karidat shelter since May 25, 2021. Allegedly, on June 8, 2021, she and her son were "violently evicted" from the shelter, their belongings put in a trash bag and they were thrown out.

In her order granting Zhou's *in forma pauperis* application, Manglona stated that, because Zhou claims she is unemployed and only receives public assistance to support herself and her minor son, Zhou may proceed with her complaint without prepaying the fees or costs.

However, regarding Zhou's complaint, Manglona found that Zhou has failed to cite any particular federal law stating that her case falls under the federal court's jurisdiction.

"Manglona must first determine if it has subject matter jurisdiction before it can consider the merits of the complaint. She represents that there is federal question jurisdiction but fails to cite to any particular federal law. In 28 U.S.C. § 1331, the statute for federal question jurisdiction, [it] explains that '[t]he district court shall have original jurisdiction of all civil actions arising under the Constitution, laws, or treaties of the United States.' Here, Zhou's bare bone complaint is premised on an eviction by Karidat from the Guma Esperansa shelter. 'Because landlord-tenant disputes are matters of state law, an action for eviction cannot be the basis for federal question jurisdiction.' The court concludes it lacks federal question jurisdiction such that it must dismiss the action pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(h)(3). Moreover, the court is unable to divine an alternative basis for subject matter jurisdiction," said Manglona.

Although Zhou has not adequately pleaded jurisdiction, Manglona said the court grants her leave to amend her complaint to correct the deficiency by alleging sufficient facts to establish jurisdiction.

NEW YEAR

From page 1

works to the closing chorus of "Auld Lang Syne" 366 days into the future—2024 is a leap year—it could be the year for finally achieving long-elusive goals, fulfilling aspirations and being resolute on all those New Year resolutions.

"As humans, we are creatures that aspire," said Omid Fotuhi, a social psychologist who is a motivation and performance researcher.

"The fact that we have goals, the fact that we want to set goals is just a manifestation of that internal and almost universal desire to want to stretch, to want to reach, to want to expand and grow," said Fotuhi, the director of learning innovation at Western Governors University Labs and a research associate at the University of Pittsburgh.

"New Year's resolutions are one of those ways in which we do that," he said. "There's something very liberating about a fresh start. Imagine starting on a blank canvas. Anything is possible."

If so, could this be the year to run a marathon, vanquish (or make peace with) old foes such as the bathroom scale and a thickening waist? Maybe learn Mandarin or register to vote, and actually vote? So many questions, and so much time to delay.

Tim Williams used to issue himself a panoply of resolutions: lose weight, drink less, exercise more and yada yada.

Now, he doesn't bother.

"In the past, I would make them, and I would fail or give up on them or whatever," said Williams, a part-time resident of Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Carla Valeria Silva de Santos, a Florida transplant from Brazil, wants to learn to play the guitar. A native Portuguese speaker, she wants to learn Spanish and improve her English.

With any resolution, she said, the ultimate goal is "to improve your life and be in peace with yourself."

Josh Moore, another Fort Lauderdale resident, sees things in line with the natural philosopher Sir Isaac Newton and physics. For every action there must be an equal reaction.

"If you do something like eat a bunch of candy or a bunch of desserts at a holiday party, go run," he said while interrupting a jog with his dog. "Maybe you went out drinking too much and you might have a hangover. But then next day when you're feeling better, go to the gym."

Too many people are too soft on themselves, he posited. "You've got to actually hold yourself accountable."

Resolutions don't have to be big, grandiose or overly ambitious, Fotuhi said.

Even it they are, he said value should not exclusively be derived from the achievement but also be measured by what you become by trying to better yourself.

"Goals are only there to serve a function to get you started," Fotuhi said. "If they don't do that, then maybe that's not the appropriate goal for you."

In other words, it is a time to recalibrate goals and expectations, he said, adding that some people hang on to outdated goals for way too long.

MPLT

From page 1

General and Office of the Public Auditor against the Department of Public Lands regarding its handling of and accounting for public land lease funds.

Robert T. Torres, on behalf of the MPLT trustees, also requested Attorney General Edward Manibusan and acting Public Auditor Dora Inos-Deleon Guerrero to investigate/audit DPL for its alleged continuing withholding of net land lease funds and failure to remit the funds to MPLT.

"We believe such an investigation will inform the executive and legislative branches, as well as the beneficiaries of the general fund, of the findings of violations and result in compliance by DPL," said Torres in the complaint filed last Wednesday.

The MPLT trustees accuse DPL of fraud/waste/abuse of public land lease funds, and failure to comply with Article 11 of the CNMI Constitution, the CNMI Planning and Budgeting Act, and Public Law 15-2.

As of press time yesterday, DPL Secretary Teresita A. Santos has yet to comment on MPLT's complaint.

Torres cited the following examples in the MPLT complaint:

■ Failure to remit $1 million from settlement funds in the lawsuit involving Mariana Resort & Spa property.

■ Failure to remit $2.5 million taken by then-governor Benigno R. Fitial in fiscal year 2010 via executive order.

■ Failure to remit $1.97 for land compensation paid by DPL (in 2012 DPL audit).

■ Unauthorized establishment of bank accounts to place land lease funds.

In relation to the $1-million settlement funds, Torres said Rep. Blas Jonathan T. Attao (Ind-Saipan) recently introduced a legislation to appropriate these funds for "enhanced services" for DPL-essentially a supplemental budget for DPL.

The lawyer said the AG has already informed DPL that any supplemental or excess funds must be remitted to MPLT.

"We are concerned that the Legislature is not being informed of the issues in dispute," Torres said.

Attao introduced House Bill 23-91 last Tuesday to allow DPL to use $1 million in settlement money arising from a DPL lawsuit in order to "enhance" its services. The House of Representatives passed the legislation that same day. That money is settlement funds from Kan Pacific Saipan Ltd. and Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC over DPL's lawsuit against Kan Pacific for breach of a land lease agreement.

In reference to the failure to remit $2.5 million to MPLT, Torres said DPL allowed the Office of the Governor to take the $2.5 million without making any effort to secure the return of those funds to DPL-as is the DPL's secretary's fiduciary duty pursuant to Public Law 15-2.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

YEOM

From page 1

all pending issues with the casino licensee, Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC.

DeLeon Guerrero pointed out that Yeom is the petitioner for the revocation hearing process of IPI's casino license. He, on the other hand, will serve as an advocate for Yeom.

DeLeon Guerrero said the board can only hire an executive director, but it's the executive director who can hire staff.

Before this appointment, Yeom's last day in office was last Jan. 18, 2023, as the CCC office temporarily closed down starting the following day, Jan. 19, due to lack of funds.

When asked why he agreed to join the CCC again even if only for two months, Yeom said he never wanted to leave the commission.

"We've got unfinished business to take care of," he said, adding that he is one of the so-called experts in the casino industry and has been here since the CNMI's casino industry's inception.

"I want to make sure that the industry goes in the right way," he said.

Yeom said the CCC has a limited budget and he thanks Gov. Arnold I. Palacios for giving the commission "some breathing room," even in a minimal sense.

"It gave us our chance to come back and hopefully take care of the unfinished business. It's only two months for now, but you never know how things are [going to] flow," he said.

CUC offices closed on Jan. 1, 2

In observance of New Year's Day, Commonwealth Utilities Corp. offices will be closed on Monday, Jan. 1, 2024, and Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024.

Customer Service Centers, however, will resume normal business hours from 7:30am to 5pm on Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024, to accommodate our customers.

For more information, contact CUC's hotline at (670) 236-4333 or visit our website and Facebook page for the latest updates.

For emergencies, contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282. ***(CUC)***

IPI

From page 1

IPI director/manager Howyo Chi replied, "Nothing yet," when *Saipan Tribune* asked him yesterday about the matter.

Chi said the Commonwealth Casino Commission board set a revocation hearing for IPI's casino license on Jan. 31, 2024, but he has not received the official board's letter yet.

CCC executive director Andrew Yeom said yesterday that he is unaware if IPI paid the entire $62 million or a portion of it by Saturday's deadline or after the deadline.

"[The Department of] Finance is closed for the holidays and won't be able to verify until we get back to work on Wednesday. We'll see," Yeom said.

He also disclosed that the CCC board on Thursday tentatively set the revocation hearing for Jan. 31, 2024.

"We're supposed to be served with an official notice, but not yet," Yeom said.

The CCC board issued a 30-day notice of payment to IPI last Nov. 30. The board had determined that the reasonable deadline for IPI to pay the 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023 casino license fees is 30 days from receipt of the notice. The 30 days expired last Saturday.

CCC board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero said in an interview during a break in the CCC board meeting last Thursday that the revocation hearing won't specifically be about the 30-day determination. Rather, it is in reference to the CCC board's enforcement actions 2021-003 and 003, which went in into the Superior Court and CNMI Supreme Court, DeLeon Guerrero said.

"That basically is what we're pursuing now for the revocation. They need to comply with that. That's been fully litigated," the chairman said.

He said there was an order that came out of CCC and it has to do with non-payment of license fee, regulatory fee, three months reserved for payroll, and to vendors that IPI owes that are uncontested.

DeLeon Guerrero said those are already litigated and that they are not going to relitigate it.

"What has been litigated is done. Just because you're not satisfied with it doesn't mean you can come back and bring it up. …That's something that we'll be discussing," he said.

OGO

From page 3

agencies the legal foundation to promulgate efficient rules and regulations to verify reporting accuracy and collect due tax revenue, especially now that we are facing financial challenges.

"This measure should be understood by our agencies and general public as part of an effort not to resort to imposing more taxes. We all must work together by being each others' eyes and ears so the government can continue providing public services." Ogo, said.

Ogo's bill is titled "To amend Title 4, Division 1, by adding a new Chapter 13 and repealing Chapter 5, § 1502, Hotel Occupancy Tax, and for other purposes."

If anyone wants a copy of the bill and comment on it, contact Ogo's office at 670-664-8888 or write to kuentosmarianas@gmail.com. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

UOG alumna begins yearlong fellowship in Panama

A former president of the University of Guam Biology Club and a former Doris Duke Conservation Scholar has made her way to the tropical forests of Panama, where she is conducting a yearlong study on bats under the mentorship of a Smithsonian research scientist.

Heather Jingco, a '22 B.S. Biology-Integrative Biology alumna under the UOG College of Natural & Applied Sciences, is in the first-ever group of scholars selected for RaMP-UP—a paid one-year fellowship offered by the Global Sustainability Scholars program of the University of Colorado Boulder and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. It aims to nurture scholars from underrepresented backgrounds in STEM fields to eventual research careers focused on tropical biodiversity.

Her cohort, which began in October, includes 12 scholars from around the United States and its territories.

"Being a part of a cohort of young scientists with diverse backgrounds yet on the same journey for the next year is impactful knowing that we share the same goals for the future of science," Jingco said.

With an interest in behavioral research and tropical ecosystems, Jingco was placed under the Smithsonian Bat Lab with Dr. Rachel Page as her main mentor. Their goal is to find out if light pollution is affecting the feeding habits of the Carollia perspicillata, known as Seba's short-tailed bat, and if artificial light has any effect on their foraging. She says their findings could have implications on the flexibility and resiliency of these bats in their increasingly urbanized habitat.

UOG

Heather Jingco takes data for bats caught via mist netting in Panama.

UOG

Heather Jingco holds a *Carollia perspicillata*, the focal species for her one-year research project in Panama under the RaMP-UP Fellowship.

A desire to nurture a deeper connection with nature

The fellowship is a stepping stone that Jingco hopes to eventually apply to the many needed conservation efforts in Guam and the Mariana Islands. Her plans include pursuing a graduate degree and then working throughout the Marianas, staying close to her roots.

"My goal for the next year is to develop practical research skills and learn how research is structured within a tropical ecological context and to bring that knowledge back home with the goal of eventual application," she said.

Jingco encourages UOG students interested in conservation and biodiversity to apply to next year's RaMP-UP program. The program is now accepting applications for its 2024 cohort until April 28, 2024, at https://www.gsscholar.org/rampup-fellows-program.

"I hope that this opportunity I've been lucky to take part in will inspire other islanders to dream big, develop their skills, and pay it back to our community and our islands," she said. ***(UOG)***

UOG

University of Guam alumna Heather Jingco, front row left, in October with the first RaMP-UP cohort of fellows under the Global Sustainability Scholars program of the University of Colorado Boulder and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In Re the Matter of	]	FCD-GU CIVIL
the Petition	]	ACTION NO.
for the Appointment	]	23-0513
of General	]	
Guardianship for:	]	
	]	NOTICE OF
J.W.J	]	HEARING
Minor Child(ren)	]	
	]	
By:	]	
	]	
Joe Etpison	]	
Petitioner(s)	]	
	]	

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on February 14, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. in Courtroom 217A, before Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Dated this 18th day of December, 2023.

Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court
/s/
Deputy Clerk of Court

Faith, Hope and
KARIDAT
Catholic Charities - Diocese of Chalan Kanoa

Request for Proposal for Financial Audit

Karidat Social Services is soliciting competitive sealed proposals to perform a financial and compliance audit in accordance with the Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS), the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and in accordance with the provisions of Uniform Guidance for the fiscal years 2023, 2024 and 2025.

1. Contents of Proposal: The following information must be included in the Audit Proposal:
- A. Title Page Containing
  1. RFP Subject
  2. Name of the Firm
  3. Local Address
  4. Telephone Number(s)
  5. Email address
  6. Name of contact person
  7. Submission date

II. Transmittal Letter:
- A. A brief statement of your understanding of the work to be performed and an affirmative statement to perform work within the time period stipulated.
- B. State all-inclusive fees for which the audit will be performed.

III. Firm Profile:
Provide a brief description of you firm's personnel education background and experience, number of staff, staff level (partner, manager, supervisor, etc.) and listing of clients serviced. The firm must make an affirmative statement that at least the partners are Certified Public Accounts (CPA's).

IV. Proposal Evaluation Criteria: The proposal will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria.
- A. Responsiveness of the proposal in clearly stating understanding of the work to be performed.
  1. Audit coverage
  2. Overall estimates as well as the time estimates for each major section of the work to be performed.
- B. Qualifications and experience of the firm
  1. Size and structure of the firm
  2. Ability to maintain continuity of project
  3. Experience of the firm in auditing Federal Financial Assistance programs and Non-Profit Organizations.
- C. Qualification and experience of staff to be assigned: education, position in the firm, number of years, and types of experience will be considered
  1. Qualifications of the audit team
  2. Supervision to be exercised over the firm's audit team
- D. Audit Fee

V. Audit Administration Matters:
- A. Karidat staff will prepare schedule as required by the Auditor.
- B. Audit Planning meetings, interim conferences and exit conference may be attended by the following officials
  1. Karidat's Board of Directors, the Executive Director, Accountants, and the Administrative Officer.
- C. Karidat will issue the Contract Award on February 9, 2024.
- D. The audit field work must be completed by May 15, 2024.
- E. The draft audit report must be completed by June 15, 2024.
- F. The Final Audit Report for each year will be transmitted on June 30th of the corresponding year.

VI. Confidentiality of Audit Proposals: All audit proposals will be reviewed in a confidential manner. Proposals must be labeled "CONFIDENTIAL" and transmitted to the Executive Director, Karidat Social Services, P.O. Box 501058, Saipan, MP 96950. It may also be hand delivered to Karidat's Office located at the, 5483 Dandan Road, Dandan Village, Saipan.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com

INVITATION FOR BID (IFB) NMHC IFB 2024-003

(This ad is paid by NMHC by HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE: February 09, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

DANDAN WATER TANK REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Project Package will be available on December 26, 2023, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of One-Hundred Dollars ($100.00) is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.

The provisions on the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference will be held at the NMHC Central Office located in Garapan, Saipan on **January 09, 2024, 10:00 a.m.** In addition, a Mandatory site Visit/Inspection of the project site will be conducted immediately after the Pre-Bid Conference. Failure to attend both the Mandatory Pre-bid conference and the Mandatory site Visit/Inspection will be considered a non-responsive bidder.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-9447 or via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during business hours, 7:30am – 4:30pm Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp • Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) NMHC RFP 2024-001

(This is ad is paid for NMHC with HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE: February 09, 2024, 2:00 p.m.

INSTALLATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION (CUC) UNDERGROUND POWER SERVICE TO CRITICAL LOADS PROJECT

Proposal Package will be available on December 26, 2023, at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan, during regular working hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) Monday thru Friday except CNMI holidays. A non-refundable payment of One-Hundred Dollars ($100.00) is required for each set of the project package. Payment must be made payable to NMHC and receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the project package at the reception counter.

The provisions on the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

A Mandatory Pre-Proposal Meeting will be held at the NMHC Tinian Field Office located at the NMC Campus, San Jose, Tinian, on **January 11, 2024, 10:00 a.m.** In addition, a Mandatory site Visit/Inspection of the project site will be conducted immediately after the Pre-Proposal Meeting. Failure to attend both the Mandatory Pre-Proposal meeting and the Mandatory site Visit/Inspection will be considered a non-responsive proposer/offeror.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-9447 or via email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during business hours, 7:30am – 4:30pm Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director
Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC)

/s/ MERCED "MARCIE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

USCG aids stranded vessel in Guam on Christmas weekend

SANTA RITA, Guam—In a successful search and rescue operation executed by U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam and Guam Fire Rescue, the recreational vessel Rascal, with six adults aboard, was safely towed to Hagåtña Boat Basin after being disabled and adrift off Tanguisson Beach last Dec. 23, 2023.

"This case underscores the importance of being prepared and calling for help at the first sign of trouble at sea," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Will Naden, the coxswain of CG *45753*. "Our timely response was crucial, but equally important was the crew of Rascal's swift decision to contact us. Navigating through winds of 18-20 knots and 7-foot seas, our team demonstrated skill and coordination, ensuring a safe outcome."

The Joint Rescue Sub-Center watchstanders received the distress call on Saturday morning from the operator of *Rascal*, a 28-foot Boston Whaler. The watchstanders promptly entered the distress phase of operations, issuing an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast and coordinating the search and rescue mission. They also placed the *Rascal* crew on a 15-minute communications check-in schedule during response. The ready 45-foot response-boat medium CG *45753* crew from Station Apra Harbor launched, while watchstanders also briefed Guam Fire Rescue 2 for assistance.

USCG

The crew of a U.S. Coast Guard 45-foot Response Boat-Medium from Station Apra Harbor arrives safely to the harbor with the 28-foot recreational boat *Rascal* after conducting a tow near Tanguisson Beach, Guam, on Dec. 23, 2023.

USCG

The crew of a U.S. Coast Guard 45-foot Response Boat-Medium from Station Apra Harbor tows the 28-foot recreational boat *Rascal* near Tanguisson Beach, Guam, on Dec. 23, 2023.

USCG

The crew of a U.S. Coast Guard 45-foot Response Boat-Medium from Station Apra Harbor conducts a post search and rescue boarding after responding to a search and rescue case involving the 28-foot recreational boat *Rascal* in tow off Tanguisson Beach, Guam, on Dec. 23, 2023.

Despite challenging sea conditions, the CG *45753* crew, departing from Sumay Cove, reached *Rascal* within an hour of the call. They located the vessel drifting away from the reef, aided by winds and seas. The crew successfully executed a stern tow, with the *Rascal* arriving safely at Hagåtña Boat Basin, escorted by GFR 2, just over an hour after beginning the tow. A post-rescue boarding confirmed the boaters' compliance with safety measures.

Weather conditions and safety advisory

At the time of the incident, conditions included northeast winds of 18-20 knots, seas up to 7 feet, and visibility around 7 miles with scattered showers. The National Weather Service forecasters issued a high surf and a rip current statement for the area, which will persist through midweek. Responders continue to advise boaters and beachgoers to exercise caution during this period.

The U.S. Coast Guard commends the crew of *Rascal* for their quick action and reminds the public to remain vigilant and prepared while at sea, especially during the holiday season when many choose to frequent the waters and beaches. ***(USCG)***

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2nd Floor Arrival Bldg.
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950 |
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
Website: www.cnmiports.com

INVITATION FOR BID
PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-003-24-(REPACKAGED)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 10, 2024: 2:00 P.M.

"SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF TWO (2) BRAND NEW SXS UTILITY VEHICLES. ONE UNIT FOR THE FRANCISCO C ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND ONE UNIT FOR THE FRANCISCO M. BORJA/TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT"

THE BID PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP BEGINNING DECEMBER 27, 2023 AT THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY, 2ND FLOOR, DEPARTURE BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT UPON PAYMENT OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE OF $100. PAYMENT SHALL BE MADE IN CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, CREDIT CARD, OR U.S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER. ALL APPLICANTS SHALL PAY THE $100.00 TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE BID.

BIDDERS ARE TO SUBMIT ONE (1) ORIGINAL AND TWO (2) COPIES OF THEIR BIDS IN A SEALED ENVELOPE AND MARKED "SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF TWO (02) BRAND NEW SXS UTILITY VEHICLES **(IFB-003-24-REPACKAGED)**" TO THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2ND FLOOR, ARRIVAL BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OR **BEFORE 2:00 P.M., JANUARY 10, 2024. A 10% BID BOND OR CASHEIR'S CHECK PAYABLE TO CPA SHALL BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BID DOCUMENTS.** BIDDERS SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATIONS ALL CHARGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCUREMENT BEFORE FINALIZING ITS BID PRICE.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CPA PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION §40-50-1020 AND 1025 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CPA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CPA.

LEO B. TUDELA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: _____

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2nd Floor Arrival Bldg.
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950 |
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
Website: www.cnmiports.com

INVITATION FOR BID
PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-001-24(REPACKAGED)

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 10, 2024: 2:00 P.M.

"SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF TWO (2) BRAND NEW PICK-UP TRUCKS TO THE FRANCISCO MANGLONA BORJA TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT"

THE BID PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP BEGINNING DECEMBER 27, 2023 AT THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY, 2ND FLOOR, DEPARTURE BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT UPON PAYMENT OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE OF $100. PAYMENT SHALL BE MADE IN CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, CREDIT CARD, OR U.S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER. ALL APPLICANTS SHALL PAY THE $100.00 TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE BID.

BIDDERS ARE TO SUBMIT ONE (1) ORIGINAL AND TWO (2) COPIES IN A SEALED ENVELOPE AND MARKED "SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF TWO (02) BRAND NEW PICK-UP TRUCKS TO THE FRANCISCO MANGLONA BORJA TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT **(IFB-001-24-REPACKAGED)**" TO THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2ND FLOOR, ARRIVAL BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OR **BEFORE 2:00 P.M., JANUARY 10, 2024. A 10% BID BOND OR CASHEIR'S CHECK PAYABLE TO CPA SHALL BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BID DOCUMENTS.** BIDDERS SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATIONS ALL CHARGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCUREMENT BEFORE FINALIZING ITS BID PRICE.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CPA PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION §40-50-1020 AND 1025 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CPA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CPA.

LEO B. TUDELA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: _____

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-002

AGINGAN WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT IMPROVEMENTS

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Construction of Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The work consists of furnishing all labor, supervision, equipment, materials and supplies for the construction of various improvements within the Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) for the project referred to as the AGINGAN WWTP IMPROVEMENTS, Saipan, CNMI under Project No. S18-065 and Project No. S20-079.

The work generally includes, but is not limited to:

Project No. S18-065
Installation of the owner-furnished primary screen within 120 calendar days after Notice to Proceed is issued. Additionally, replacement of the clarifier drive; rehabilitation of the headworks includes replacement of the weir gates to stop gate, a ½-ton hand crank hoist/crane; clarifier bypass; electrical service rehabilitation, replacement of the existing Motor Control Center (MCC), installation of a generator automatic transfer switch (ATS) and digester decanter improvements. The work shall be done in accordance with Project No. S18-065 Plans and Specifications.

Project No. S20-079
Provision of temporary facilities including bypass pumping; furnishing and installing new Vortex Grit Removal Equipment and headworks slide gates, which will require demolition of certain elements within and improvements to the existing headworks channel and deck area; replacement of the existing surface aerator equipment in the North/South Aeration Tanks and Aerobic Digester Tank with a new surface aerator equipment which will require modifications to the existing concrete tank structures; replacement of existing pipe supports for the Aeration Basin influent piping; associated electrical, instrumentation, and control improvements; demobilization; and all other work described in Project No. S20-079 Plans and Specifications.

The work shall be done without disruption to the daily operation of the wastewater system.

CUC requires the Project to be completed within 820 calendar days from the date of the award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **December 27, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-IFB-24-002, Agingan Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements",** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 (ChST) on December 28, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer – via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, and Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Mayor welcomes 5 Japanese exchange students

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Saipan Mayor Ramon "RB" Blas Camacho welomed five Japanese exchange students during a courtesy visit Wednesday afternoon at his office in Susupe.

The five students, Gempei Ojima, 14; Yamato Maie, 14; Akifumi Shibata, 14; China Kawasaki, 10; and Sara Kurauchi, 9; along with their chaperone, Minoru Taniguchi, arrived on Saipan early Wednesday morning.

They expressed their excitement to be on the island, and through an interpreter shared a little about themselves to Camacho and his staff.

After the meeting, the students sang a Japanese song and Taniguchi gave some gifts to Camacho.

Camacho shared with the media that he's not only happy that this exchange program has continued, but he seeks to further its reach in order to get more Japanese tourists to visit to the island.

"Probably by Feb. I might go to another city in Japan to open up another program and a sister city... [I'm] looking forward to expand this so we can... continue the relationship with the Japanese community in helping each other. Especially since we highly need tourists to revive our economy, so at least through this program and as we continue this relationship we hope to entice and bring Japanese tourists to come here. We're going to continue this program because I see that it's very beneficial either way... in exchanging culture you know it's so important," he said.

Taniguchi applauded Camacho and shared that one of the students present, Kurauchi, was not only the youngest student visiting Saipan during this exchange, but her mother had also been an exchange student who visited Saipan years back. Taniguchi said it was like a legacy has continued.

Kurauchi told Camacho and the gathered media that she's personally looking forward to swim in Saipan waters herself.

The students will be on Saipan until Jan. 1 and during that time they will be touring both historical sites as well as experiencing local culture and food.

The exchange program had been a collaborative effort between the Kokusai Seiyounen Kensyuu Kyokai exchange program and the Saipan Mayor's Office.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

From left, Gempei Ojima, Yamato Maie, Akifumi Shibata, China Kawasaki, and Sara Kurauchi, along with their chaperone Minoru Taniguchi pose with Saipan Mayor Ramon "RB" Blas Camacho last Wednesday at the Saipan Mayor's Office in Susupe.

Commonwealth Zoning Board
Board Meeting

January 4, 2024 | 2:00 PM
Zoning Office Conference Room • Chalan Laulau, Saipan
Tel: 670-234-9661/2 • Fax: 670-234-9666
E-mail: ZoningBoard@cnmizoning.com

(continuation from 12/28/23)

AGENDA

A. Preliminary Matters
1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of 12/28/2023 Meeting Agenda
4. Adoption of 12/07/2023 Special Meeting Minutes
5. Communications
6. Public Comments *(not for items to be discussed in item B. Public Hearings)*

B. Public Hearings:
1. **Conditional Use Application #2023-1260** – Green Meadow School is proposing to renovate and occupy two (2) detached pre-existing structures for its "School, Private" Use. This use is permitted in the area as a Conditional Use. The site is located on Lot No. 007 H 01 in the village of Chalan Kanoa. This area is zoned as Village Residential.

2. **Conditional Use Application #2023-1645** – Top Shelf, LLC is proposing to amend Conditional Use Permit No. 2020-10297 to include an Outdoor Growing area for its "Cannabis Farm" Use. This use is permitted in the area as a Conditional Use. The site is located on Lot No. 053 E 11 in the village of As Teo. This area is zoned as Rural.

C. Old Business
1. **Zoning Board and Office comments on Proposed House Local Bill 23-XX** – To amend the Saipan Official Zoning Map sheet 17 of 29 to rezone certain districts to "Tourist Resort"; and for other purposes, *by Chairman John Paul Sablan.*

D. New Business
1. Parking regulations in Garapan Core (GC), Garapan East (GE), Village Commercial (VC), and other zoning districts.

E. Zoning Administrator's Report
1. Operations (Permitting and Enforcement)
2. Zoning's Clean-Healthy-Attractive-Safe Campaign
3. Fiscal Years 2023 Budget
4. Zoning FY23 Citizen Centric Report
5. Update on proposed Blighted Properties regulations, as authorized by Saipan Local Law 20-25, prior to commencement of full enforcement actions on January 01, 2024
6. Update on Zoning Office Buildings Renovations, Capitol Hill
7. Proposed Resolutions for Board Adoption

   a. To correct the title of the law from "Saipan Zoning Law of 2013- As amended" to "Saipan Zoning Law of 2020" for publication (as authorized under SZL Section 1309)

   b. To adopt proposed changes to Article 4. Table of Uses for transmittal to the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation
      1. To include Cannabis Manufacturing and Processing as conditional use within Rural, VC, MC, and Industrial zones.
      2. To include Furniture Stores as permitted use in VC, MC, Industrial, GC, GE, and Beach Road zoning districts.

   c. To rescind official Zoning communication dated August 2021 to surveyors and agencies regarding the suspension of *Article 11. Land Development and Subdivision*

   d. To implement immediate removal of signboards at intersections on major and secondary roadways, and limit the placement and maximum size for directional signs

   e. To impose requirements on Rezone process
      1.) Expiration date to commence development after adoption of Rezone applications by the Commonwealth Zoning Board and the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation

F. Executive Session

G. Adjournment

/s/
Henry Hofschneider, Chairman

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP24-CHCC/CGC-CORS 988 PROGRAM-004

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JAN. 5TH, 2024 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

OFFICE LEASE

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IFTO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP24-CHCC/WIC-003

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JAN. 05TH, 2024 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES - BANGLADESHI INTERPRETER

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

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/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW24-ITB No.: 42400017

SUBMISSION DATE: January 19, 2024 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Repair of the Sugar Dock Beach Park"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after **December 19, 2023** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan. A non-refundable payment of One Hundred Dollars ($100.00) is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Teasurer and a receipt of pay-ment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at the DPW Technical Services Division.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **January 05, 2024,** 9:00 a.m. local time at the Project Site at Sugar Dock Beach Park, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **January 10, 2024** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ RAY N. YUMUL
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
Acting Director, Division of Procurement Services

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2nd Floor Arrival Bldg.
P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950|
Phone: (670) 237-6500/1 • Fax: (670) 234-5962
Website: www.cnmiports.com

INVITATION FOR BID
PROJECT NO. CPA-IFB-005-24

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 10, 2024: 2:00 P.M.

"SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF TWO (2) BRAND NEW VEHICLES. ONE UNIT FOR THE FRANCISCO C ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND ONE UNIT FOR THE FRANCISCO M. BORJA/TINIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT"

THE BID PACKAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR PICK UP BEGINNING DECEMBER 27, 2023 AT THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT, COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY, 2ND FLOOR, DEPARTURE BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT UPON PAYMENT OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE FEE OF $100. PAYMENT SHALL BE MADE IN CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK, CREDIT CARD, OR U.S. POSTAL MONEY ORDER. ALL APPLICANTS SHALL PAY THE $100.00 TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE BID.

BIDDERS ARE TO SUBMIT ONE (1) ORIGINAL AND TWO (2) COPIES IN A SEALED ENVELOPE AND MARKED "SUPPLY & DELIVERY OF TWO (02) BRAND NEW VEHICLES **(IFB-005-24)**" TO THE OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, 2ND FLOOR, ARRIVAL BUILDING, SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ON OR **BEFORE 2:00 P.M., JANUARY 10, 2024. A 10% BID BOND OR CASHEIR'S CHECK PAYABLE TO CPA SHALL BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BID DOCUMENTS.** BIDDERS SHALL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATIONS ALL CHARGES ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROCUREMENT BEFORE FINALIZING ITS BID PRICE.

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THE CPA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL BIDS, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF CPA.

LEO B. TUDELA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DATE: _____

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM • WEBSITE: HTTPS: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport
"Car Rental Concession"

Request for Proposals
for: CPA-RFP-001-24
CPA Concession No. CRS-2023-01

The Commonwealth Ports Authority ("CPA" or "Authority") is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport ("Car Rental Concession"). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a period of two years with an option upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-Concession No. CRS-2023-01 is **December 6, 2023**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on January 9, 2024**, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of $100.00. Payment shall be made in cash, credit card, or cashier's check payable to the Commonwealth Ports Authority to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

/s/
LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 1

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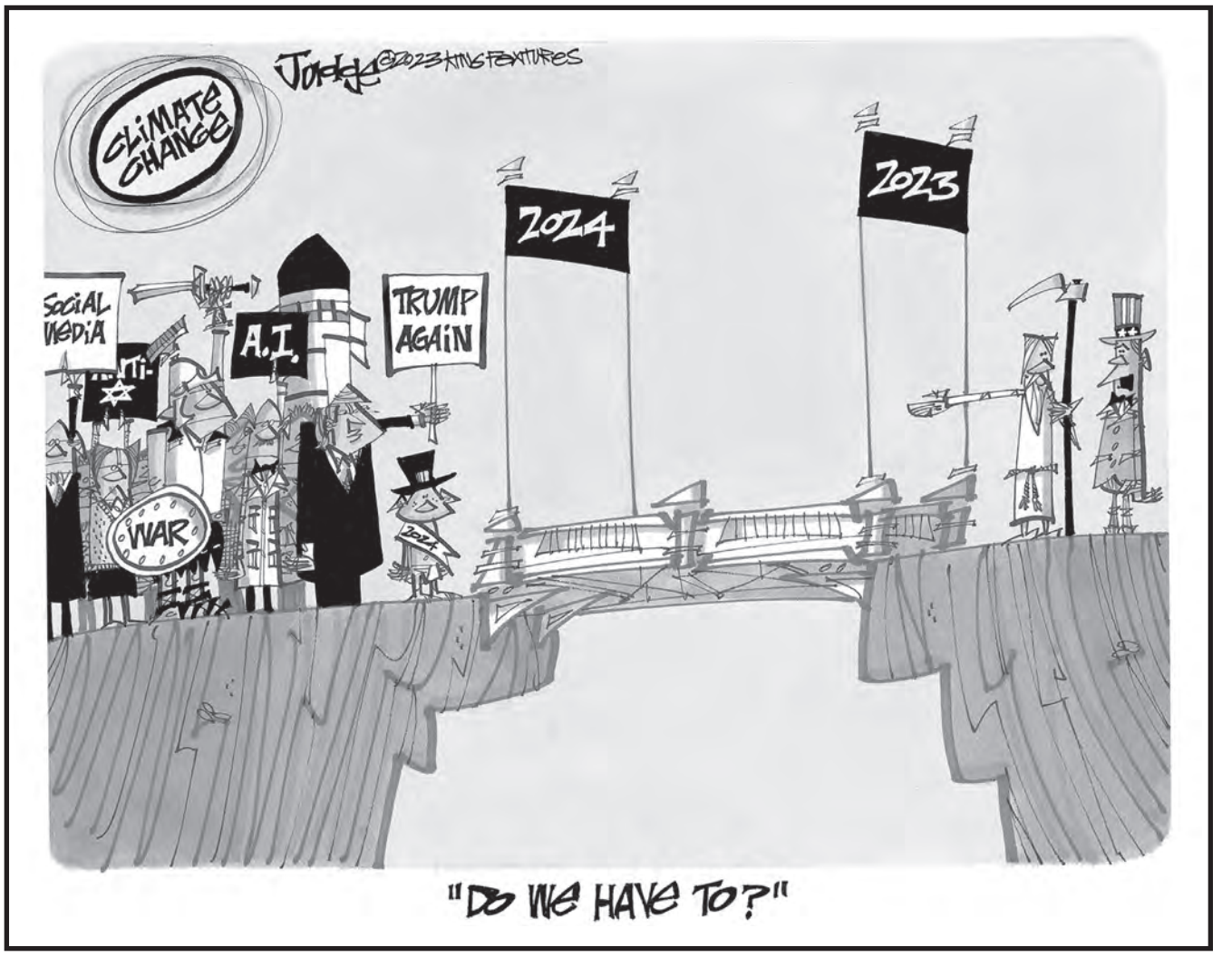

Ukrainians will fight Russia no matter what. But this is what they need to win

By BERNARD-HENRI LÉVY
Los Angeles Times

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has said it many times: If Western military support were to falter, the Ukrainians would continue to fight.

They would do it alone if need be, their backs to the wall, at a terrifying human cost.

They would be in largely the same situation they were in during the first phase of Russia's full-scale invasion. After all, the Ukrainians had to wait months to more than a year for the United States to provide the weapons they needed. During those long months, the courage of the Ukrainians and the talent of their commanders were enough to hold off a Russian military whose troops still were fresh, motivated and sure of themselves.

In a worst-case scenario in which Congress continues to refuse to approve the funds requested by President Joe Biden and Europe follows suit in withdrawing support, the conflict would revert to those early stages. And the Ukrainian forces, which I've observed for two years while making three documentaries from the front lines, would shift to a long and grueling war of resistance.

But they would not lay down their arms. This war is existential. Of this I am sure.

So here's the question: Given that the war will go on, are we going to prolong the fighting or shorten it?

Are we going to allow civilian deaths to pile up or try to minimize them?

Will the United States, for vile political reasons, let the conflict fester and encourage authoritarian and anti-American forces throughout Europe? Or will it decide to come to the aid of its natural and reliable allies in Ukraine?

What message will the country choose to send to imperial China, neo-Ottoman Turkey and an Iran racing toward the nuclear threshold? Will America welcome a multipolar world in which unchecked dictatorships once again lay down the law? Or, having abandoned its allies in Kabul, Aleppo, Erbil and Yerevan, will the country pull itself together behind Kyiv because it's never too late to correct a series of mistakes?

If it's the latter—if enough Republicans reconnect with the spirit of Reagan and enough Democrats remain faithful to that of Kennedy; if they want the world's people to know they are right to rebel and to dream of liberal democracy—then American and allied aid must urgently flow to Ukraine.

European Storm Shadow cruise missiles must be delivered to the Zaporizhzhia region to enable the men and women of the 47th Separate Mechanized Brigade—which took the village of Robotyne last summer in bold commando operations—to push south past Russian fortifications toward occupied Verbove, Tokmak, Berdyansk and the Azov Sea.

See UKRAINIANS on Page 9

Will 2024 be the year fake news destroys democracy?

BY MIHIR SHARMA
Bloomberg Opinion

Mihir Sharma is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist. A senior fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, he is author of* Restart: The Last Chance for the Indian Economy.

In 2024, democracy will face a test for which it is unready. For the first time since the internet age began, the world's four largest electoral blocs—India, the European Union, the U.S., and Indonesia—will hold general elections in the same year. Almost a billion people may go to the polls in the next 12 months, amid a storm of disinformation and digital manipulation unlike anything the world has yet seen.

The stakes are extraordinarily consequential for the future of democracy itself. In the U.S., the electoral favorite appears to revel in the possibility of becoming a dictator. In the EU, the far right is poised to surge continent-wide. Indonesia's front-runner is a former general once accused of human-rights violations. And in India, a beleaguered opposition faces its last chance to stave off what may otherwise turn into decades of one-party rule.

We have known since 2016 at least that elections in the digital age are unusually vulnerable to manipulation. While officials responsible for election integrity have been working diligently since then, they are fighting the last war. Former President Donald Trump's 2016 victory and other votes around that period were influenced by carefully seeded narratives, bot farms, and so on. In response, a small army of fact-checkers emerged around the world and mechanisms to keep "fake news" out of the formal press multiplied.

The experience of India—which, given that it has the most voters, is also the world's largest lab for election malpractice—demonstrates the limits of this work. The more scrupulous fact-checkers are, the easier they can be overwhelmed with a flood of fake news. They're also, unfortunately, human—and therefore too easy to discredit, however unfairly.

Some new ideas have begun to emerge. Even Elon Musk's critics appear fond of the "community notes" he has added to X, formerly known as Twitter, which tag viral tweets with crowd-sourced fact-checks. Because these are crowd-sourced, they respond organically to the amount of fake news in circulation and, because they are not associated with any individual group of fact-checkers, they are harder to dismiss as biased.

Yet technology has moved even faster. AI-based disinformation has already begun to proliferate—and gets harder to spot as fake with every passing month. Oddly, stopping such messages from going viral is harder when they don't immediately come across as offensive or particularly pointed. In Indonesia, for example, a TikTok video that appeared to show defense minister and presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto speaking Arabic was viewed millions of times. It was an AI-generated deepfake meant to bolster his diplomatic (and possibly his Islamic) credentials.

Nor can we assume that an increasingly digital-savvy electorate will be able to navigate this new information landscape without help. If there's one thing we have learned from the information war that has accompanied Israel's physical battle against Hamas in Gaza, it's that people who grew up with the internet are not those best-equipped to identify obvious propaganda. In fact, they seem to be least able to tell fact from fiction.

The threat to democracy is transnational. The platforms being used are global; so is the messaging being deployed. Its defense, therefore, cannot be national. For one thing, it is not a task any government can accomplish alone. For another, it is not a task any one government can be trusted to pursue on its own.

But every country has different approaches when it comes to securing its elections, and both would-be manipulators and the platforms they exploit have taken advantage of this disunity. The level of disinformation that will emerge over the coming year will wash away our individual defenses unless we adopt a more strategic and unified approach.

We do not yet know what mechanisms—whether crowd-sourcing, or transnational regulation of platforms, or shared norms on speech and de-platforming—will work best. What we will need, however, is to swiftly share information on what measures do seem to work, as well as unified pressure on platforms to adopt them.

We can learn from each other: India's TikTok ban seems to have been more effective than expected, for example. But we must also share a commitment to transparency. Regulators in India and Indonesia must be convinced that U.S.-based platforms' online norms are designed as much to protect their national cohesion and political integrity as they are to defend northern Californian speech shibboleths.

Above all else, we need to work together. The defense of democracy has always been one of the major reasons for multilateral action. In 2024, that defense must include the protection of our national elections.

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JRM commander reflects on his time in Guam and the region in this year in review; looks ahead to military growth and prosperity in the Pacific

BY GREGORY HUFFMAN
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Rear Adm. Gregory Huffman is commander of Joint Region Marianas and the senior military official for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in Guam.

Buenas yan hafa adai,

As 2023 comes to a close, and we look toward the New Year, I would like to take a moment to thank our island community for your warm hospitality, support and patriotism.

Since taking command of Joint Region Marianas in June, my wife, Judy, and I have had the pleasure to travel throughout the Mariana Islands and Micronesia. I am continually impressed and inspired by the rich culture and natural beauty that is prevalent throughout the region.

> May the coming months be full of new achievements, meaningful connections, and the fulfillment of aspirations as we continue to defend the homeland and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.

I arrived on island in the immediate aftermath of Super Typhoon Mawar, the most devastating typhoon the island has seen in decades. The typhoon's destruction tested the resiliency of our community. Despite hardships, I found that Typhoon Mawar highlighted the most beautiful qualities of our island community. We came together to rebuild better than before. There were heroic examples of selflessness everywhere, truly capturing the island spirit of *inafa' maolek*. The typhoon served as a clear reminder of the unpredictable forces of nature and the importance of unity in the face of adversity.

These qualities were further demonstrated during the 79th anniversary of Guam's Liberation Day. It demonstrated the strength of the island community and the ability of the people to remain steadfast despite challenging circumstances. One of the highlights of the celebration was the first-hand account of survival and liberation from Mrs. Carmen Kasperbauer. Her words of hope and the strength that she and others demonstrated underscore the resiliency of the people of Guam.

While we remember and honor the sacrifices of the past, we must look ahead as well. Global geopolitical tensions and current conflicts are reminders that we must remain vigilant and prepared for potential threats. It is my mission and responsibility to defend everyone that calls this island community home.

Recognizing the growing proliferation of sophisticated long-range weapons, USINDOPACOM is advancing a plan to defend Guam with a state-of-the-art enhanced integrated air and missile defense system, the Guam Defense System, or GDS. This land-based 360-degree defense system fuses the most modern air-missile defense programs to deliver a robust capability.

In August, we coordinated with the Missile Defense Agency and the U.S. Army to hold public scoping meetings to inform the community and encourage public involvement during the development of the GDS. Defense is not just about deterring our adversaries, but having the concrete capability to neutralize hostile forces that may threaten our people. The 360-degree missile defense system for Guam affirms that the U.S. military remains committed to our security and the promise of transparent communication with our government partners and communities.

I am very appreciative of the open and honest communication and teamwork shared this year with the governments of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Civilian-Military Coordination Council with Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero and her staff began as a means to communicate updates and concerns with regard to the buildup of Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz. It has proven so valuable that we have expanded the scope and frequency of these meetings to address military impacts throughout the island. Similarly, the Stakeholder Meetings held in the CNMI are equally important to posture, presence, and preparedness. It is through these meaningful discussions that we have increased our military presence with more ship visits and exercises on Rota, Saipan, and Tinian. I am grateful for the friendship and professionalism of Gov. Arnold Palacios and the Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs.

I look forward to continued opportunities to build and strengthen the relationships with the governments of Guam and the CNMI, and JRM will continue to serve as a conduit to communicate with the highest echelons of the Department of Defense. With our goals aligned, we can advance our joint efforts for the mutual benefit of our community in Guam. Homeland defense remains your military's top priority.

Regional security requires a whole-of-government approach with our allies and partners throughout Oceania. Exercises, operations and defense sites in the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau are integral components to our defense in depth and critical to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

As the senior military official for the Indo-Pacific Command in the region, I was invited to speak at the Association of Pacific Island Legislatures' 40th General Assembly in October. During the general assembly, I addressed our primary security challenges within the region, to include the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia, violent extremist organizations, as well as environmental and global health.

I also attended Joint Committee Meetings in Palau and Federated States of Micronesia where I had the honor to meet with President Surangel Whipps Jr., Vice President Aren Palik and other distinguished leaders. During the meetings, I emphasized the importance of our partnership and continued open and honest communication, and reiterated the importance of these beautiful countries as part of the Pacific Homeland.

In my 35-year naval career, nothing has inspired my holiday spirit quite like the opportunity to participate in Operation Christmas Drop. OCD is not just a humanitarian mission, but it also serves as a training opportunity for our airmen to practice real-world contingency operations. The mission enables the U.S. military to strengthen relationships with our foreign military allies. OCD was conducted 71 times since its first drop in 1952, and today OCD continues to deliver gifts and necessities to 57 islands throughout the Pacific.

It was a privilege and honor for me to end the year in Palau, representing the U.S. Navy and the Pacific Fleet at the opening ceremony for Pacific Partnership. Pacific Partnership is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief mission conducted in the Blue Continent. The trust built through collaborative exercises like Pacific Partnership strengthen our shared capacity and deepen our special strategic partnership.

There is something uniquely special about overseas duty locations. For the military members stationed in Guam we get to experience new people, new food, new hobbies, and a new culture that is both distinctly Chamorro and distinctly American. While the new adventure is exciting, the experience can be challenging at times.

I want to thank all of the organizations, both civilian and military, that support our service members and enhance their time in Guam. The United Service Organizations, Navy League, Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society, Air Force Aid Society, Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Chamber of Commerce's Armed Services Committee and countless other organizations commit time and resources to provide benefits, services, and foster a sense of connection for our service members and their families. Thank you for all that you do.

Thank you to our partners throughout the government of Guam: Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero, Delegate Moylan, the 36th Guam Legislature, and the Council of Mayors. Your friendship, professionalism, teamwork and good faith collaboration enable our mission. I firmly believe that we are One Guam and our missions are inextricably linked. Thank for your service to the people of Guam and thank you for your support.

As we bid farewell to 2023, I am grateful for the experiences, the challenges, the great achievements and the lessons we learned. I look forward to the New Year; I embrace the promise of progress, of prosperity, and the opportunities for growth. May the coming months be full of new achievements, meaningful connections, and the fulfillment of aspirations as we continue to defend the homeland and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific. Here's to 2024!

Biba Guam! *Biba* Micronesia!

UKRAINIANS

From page 9

Ukrainian drone pilots—who have demonstrated since the early days of the war that no Russian ammunition depot, naval base or ship in Crimea is out of their reach—must receive the long-range U.S. Army Tactical Missile Systems, known as ATACMS, promised since September, which they need to fully open the Black Sea.

F-16s, whose arrival near Donbas is equally overdue, are an essential complement to the artillery and infantry units working to liberate the Bakhmut and Avdiivka zones and the routes in and out of Donetsk and Luhansk.

To the south, in the Kherson zone, which was liberated more than a year ago by unassisted Ukrainian forces, the need is for river-crossing gear, amphibious equipment and light Bradley tanks. That would enable the Ukrainian commandos under the command of Maj. Gen. Andriy Kovalchuk to expand the operations I watched them conducting on far too small a scale to the eastern side of the Dnipro River, near the villages of Krynky, Kozachi Laheri and Korsunka.

Additionally, Ukraine needs an "iron dome" worthy of the name to replace the mobile antiaircraft units I accompanied in makeshift pickup trucks as they chased drones headed for major Ukrainian cities, trying to shoot them down with bazookas. I have been saying since Day 1 that helping the Ukrainians close the sky is essential.

For the most part, these weapons are readily available in American and European stockpiles. They come at a cost, of course. But that cost is far lower than that of a defeated Ukraine, which could well embolden Russia to go after a NATO country and force a full-scale U.S. and European intervention.

Our defense budgets today are half what they were during the Cold War—and of what they will have to be if we allow Russia to become an offensive threat again. While we hesitate to pay our respects to international law in dollars, the Ukrainians are paying in blood.

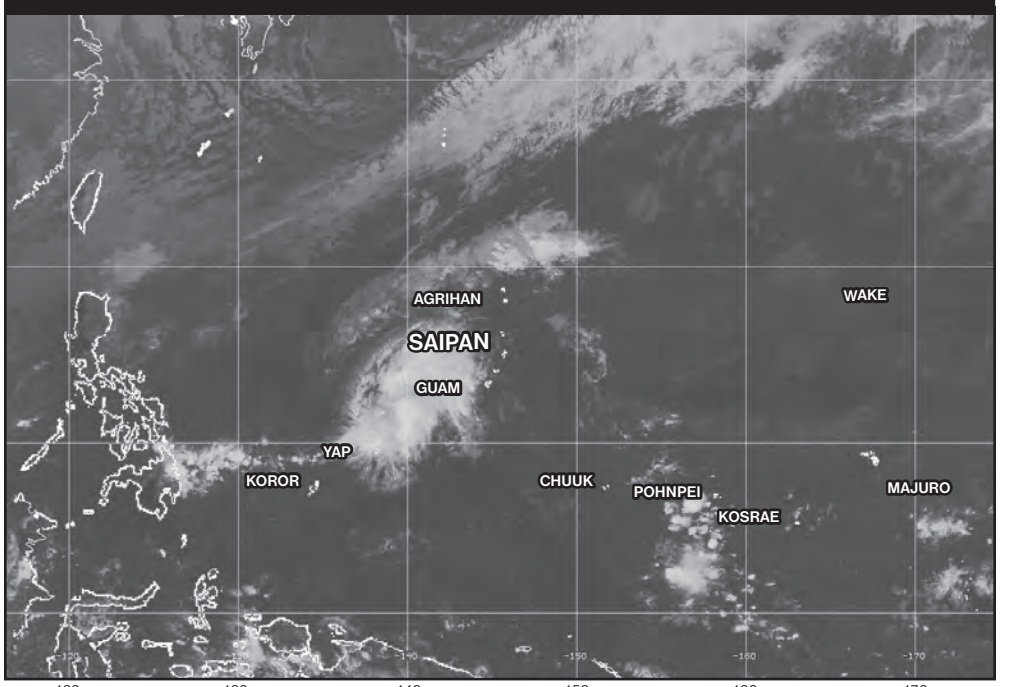
Bernard-Henri Lévy is a philosopher, author and filmmaker. His latest documentary from the front lines of the war on Ukraine, Glory to the Heroes*, recently was released nationwide and follows two others,* Slava Ukraini *and* Why Ukraine.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy, becoming mostly cloudy tuesday. Isolated showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 / 77°	86 / 77°	86 / 77°	86 / 77°	86 / 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:06 AM MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Sent out a quick update to drop showers to isolated coverage and remove thunder based on observational data and pattern recognition.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	84° / 77°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	84° / 77°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Wednesday	6:43 AM	5:58 PM
Thursday	6:43 AM	5:59 PM
Friday	6:43 AM	5:59 PM
Saturday	6:43 AM	6:00 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	11:00 AM	11:08 PM
Wednesday	-	11:33 AM	11:53 PM
Thursday	-	12:06 PM	-
Friday	12:40 AM	12:40 PM	-
Saturday	1:28 AM	1:17 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Rain	75° / 61°
Beijing	Sunny	46° / 21°
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	70° / 55°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	82° / 72°
London	Sunny	45° / 30°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	68° / 53°
Manila	Thunderstorms	81° / 79°
Melbourne	Windy	66° / 52°
Miami	Showers	83° / 52°
New York	Mixed	43° / 34°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	52° / 43°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	45° / 36°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	50° / 37°
Rome	Rain	63° / 54°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	48° / 31°
San Francisco	Rain	58° / 52°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	39° / 23°
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	59° / 43°
Washington, DC	Showers	44° / 35°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
5:25 AM	Low Tide	0.01
12:38 PM	High Tide	1.56
6:49 PM	Low Tide	0.86
11:10 PM	High Tide	1.20

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 20, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Oct 21-31, 2023
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Blake wins grand prize in SCS customer appreciation raffle

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Retiree David Blake is now the proud owner of a 24-inch Apple iMac after winning the grand prize of Saipan Computer Services' Customer Appreciation Raffle Promo.

In a raffle drawing held last Friday at the SCS office along Beach Road, Blake's lucky ticket number 00235 was drawn as the grand prize winner.

In a phone interview, Blake said it was wonderful to win the SCS grand prize and admitted it was the first time he has ever won in a big raffle like the one held by the computer shop.

Ni Made Suwani won the second and seventh top prizes of an 11.6-inch Dell Latitude 3120 laptop and a Google Nest Hub, respectively; while the third top prize, a 10.6-inch Lenova M10 Plus 128-GB tablet, went to Katsubumi Tsukagoshi.

Keiko Fujiwara won the fourth top prize of a Samsung Galaxy Watch 4 and two $30 SCS gift certificate and the fifth top prize of a Strata Home Pro Cordless Vacuum went to Maggie Masga.

Rosebeth Gregorio and John Davis won the last two major prizes, a Canon Ivy Cliq2 Instant Camera Printer and an Echo Dot Smart Speaker Built-in Clock, respectively. Six others won $30 SCS gift certificates.

Emcee Bobby Bogart of KZMI, on behalf of the winners, thanked SCS, especially owner Jerry P. Tiu, for holding the 2023 Customer Appreciation Raffle Promo.

"Seriously, is there any other company on island that shows appreciation to their customers more than Saipan Computer Services? It's amazing. Think about it: of all the companies—big or small—that have giveaways like this and try to do it every single year, no matter what the economy is for the customers, strictly for their customers. It's amazing!" he said.

Tiu, for his part, also congratulated the winners of their raffle promotion and thanked all SCS customers not only this past year but the previous years. He also wished the local economy will be better this upcoming year.

"The raffle's done. Of course, we want it to be better next year. Question is how's our economy? We want it to be better this year. Question is compared to last year, how was the economy this year? So, the only thing I can promise this year is our employees will work hard to survive."

MARK RABAGO

Saipan Computer Services owner Jerry P. Tiu, center, poses with staff and the raffle prizes of the computer store's 2023 Customer Appreciation Raffle Promo after the raffle drawing last Friday.

MARK RABAGO

Saipan Computer Services' Customer Appreciation Raffle Promo gave away $5,000 in total prizes.

Resilient economy energizes investors, as financial markets end 2023 up 24%

NEW YORK (AP)—The S&P 500 closed out 2023 with a gain of more than 24% and the Dow finished near a record high, as easing inflation, a resilient economy and the prospect of lower interest rates buoyed investors, particularly in the last two months of the year.

Stocks closed Friday with modest losses.

The S&P 500 slipped 13.52 points, or 0.3%, to 4,769.83. The benchmark index still posted a rare ninth consecutive week of gains and is just 0.6% shy of an all-time high set in January of 2022.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 20.56 points, or 0.1%, to 37,689.54 after setting a record Thursday.

The Nasdaq slipped 83.78 points, or 0.6%, to 15,011.35, but that was barely a blemish on an annual gain of more than 43%, its best performance since 2020.

For most of the year, gains in the broader market were driven largely by seven stocks—Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Nvidia, Meta Platforms and Tesla. Dubbed the Magnificent 7, they accounted for about two-thirds of the gains in the S&P 500 this year, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices. Nvidia lead the group with a gain of about 239%, driven by the mania surrounding artificial intelligence.

A strong rally in November and December marked a big psychological shift for investors, said Quincy Krosby, chief global strategist at LPL Financial, because it went beyond the big technology companies. The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies jumped more than 20% over the two months and finished 2023 with a 15.1% gain after falling 21.6% in 2022.

"It was broad participation in the market that reinforced and confirmed gains for smaller company stocks that were particularly important," Krosby said.

Investors in the U.S. came into this year bearing the bruises of sharp losses for both stocks and bonds in 2022. They expected inflation to ease further as the Federal Reserve pushed interest rates higher. The trade-off would be a weaker economy and possibly a recession. But while inflation has come down to around 3%, the economy has chugged along thanks to solid consumer spending and a healthy job market.

The stock market is now betting the Fed can achieve a "soft landing," where the economy slows just enough to snuff out high inflation, but not so much that it falls into a recession. As a result, investors now expect the Fed to begin cutting rates as early as March.

The Fed has signaled three quarter-point cuts to its benchmark interest rate next year. That rate is currently sitting between 5.25% and 5.50%, its highest level in two decades.

Chief Justice Roberts casts a wary eye on the uses of artificial intelligence in federal courts

WASHINGTON (AP)—Chief Justice John Roberts on Sunday turned his focus to the promise, and shortcomings, of artificial intelligence in the federal courts, in an annual report that made no mention of Supreme Court ethics or legal controversies involving Donald Trump.

Describing artificial intelligence as the "latest technological frontier," Roberts discussed the pros and cons of computer-generated content in the legal profession. His remarks come just a few days after the latest instance of AI-generated fake legal citations making their way into official court records, in a case involving ex-Trump lawyer Michael Cohen.

"Always a bad idea," Roberts wrote in his year-end report, noting that "any use of AI requires caution and humility."

At the same time, though, the chief justice acknowledged that AI can make it much easier for people without much money to access the courts. "These tools have the welcome potential to smooth out any mismatch between available resources and urgent needs in our court system," Roberts wrote.

The report came at the end of a year in which a series of stories questioned the ethical practices of the justices and the court responded to critics by adopting its first code of conduct. Many of those stories focused on Justice Clarence Thomas and his failure to disclose travel, other hospitality and additional financial ties with wealthy conservative donors including Harlan Crow and the Koch brothers. But Justices Samuel Alito and Sonia Sotomayor also have been under scrutiny.

The country also is entering an the beginning of an election year that seems likely to enmesh the court in some way in the ongoing criminal cases against Trump and efforts to keep the Republican former president off the 2024 ballot.

Along with his eight colleagues, Roberts almost never discusses cases that are before the Supreme Court or seem likely to get there. In past reports, he has advocated for enhanced security and salary increases for federal judges, praised judges and their aides for dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and highlighted other aspects of technological changes in the courts.

Roberts once famously compared judges to umpires who call balls and strikes, but don't make the rules. In his latest report, he turned to a different sport, tennis, to make the point that technology won't soon replace judges.

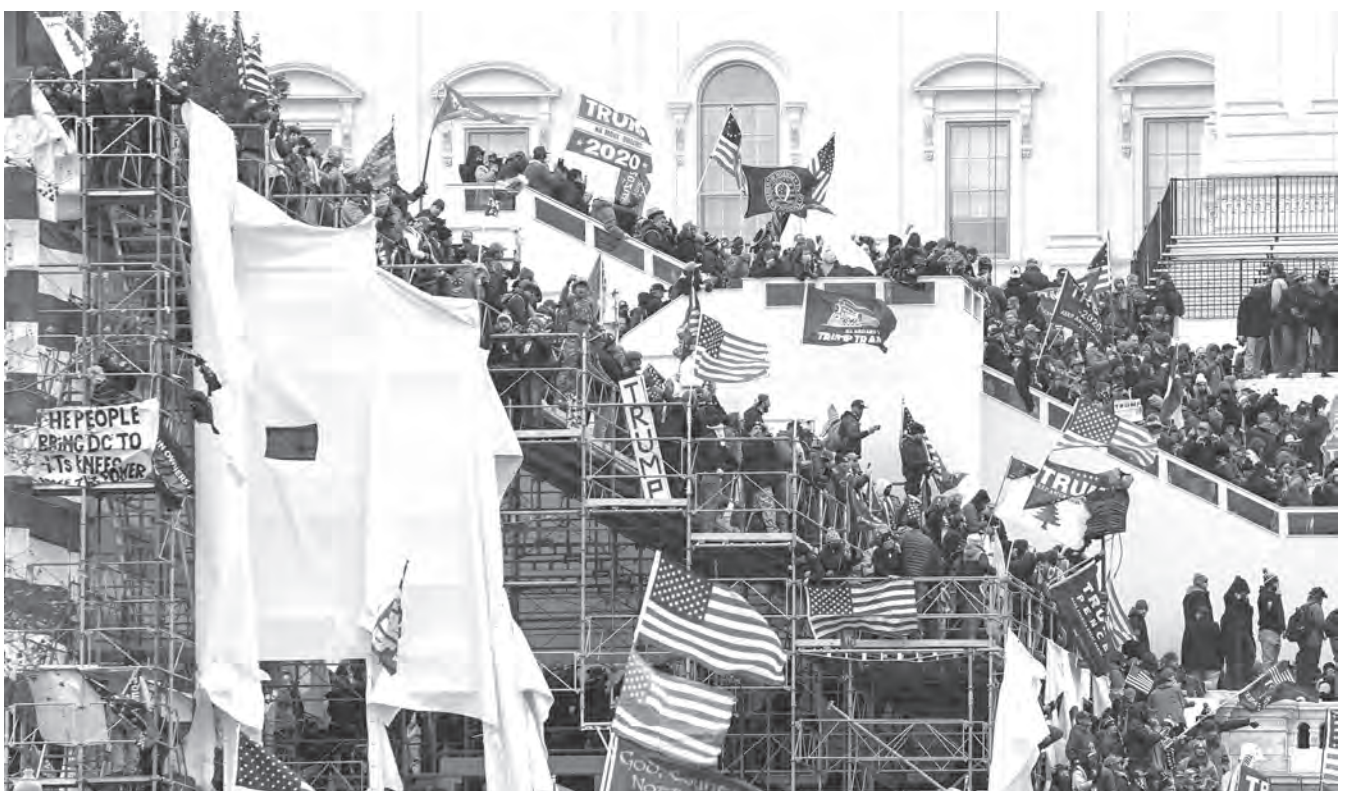
At many tennis tournaments, optical technology, rather than human line judges, now determines "whether 130 mile per hour serves are in or out. These decisions involve precision to the millimeter. And there is no discretion; the ball either did or did not hit the line. By contrast, legal determinations often involve gray areas that still require application of human judgment," Roberts wrote.

Looking ahead warily to the growing use of artificial intelligence in the courts, Roberts wrote: "I predict that human judges will be around for a while. But with equal confidence I predict that judicial work—particularly at the trial level—will be significantly affected by AI."

Nation

US democracy has overcome big stress tests since 2020 election

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI
Associated Press



AP

In this Jan. 6, 2021 file photo insurrectionists loyal to President Donald Trump riot outside the Capitol in Washington.

Over the past three years, the world's oldest democracy has been tested in ways not seen in decades.

A sitting president tried to overturn an election and his supporters stormed the Capitol to stop the winner from taking power. Supporters of that attack launched a campaign against local election offices, chasing out veteran administrators and pushing conservative states to pass new laws making it harder to vote.

At the same time, the past three years proved that American democracy was resilient.

Former President Donald Trump's attempts to overturn the 2020 election results failed, blocked by the constitutional system's checks and balances, and he now faces both federal and state charges for those efforts. Then the voters stepped in. In every presidential battleground state, they rejected all candidates who supported Trump's stolen election lies and were running for statewide offices that had some oversight of elections.

The election infrastructure in the country performed well, with only scattered disruptions during the 2022 midterms. New voting laws, many of which are technical and incremental, had little discernable impact on actual voting.

"Voters have stepped up to defend our democracy over the past few years," said Joanna Lydgate, chief executive officer of States United, which tracks those who refuse to believe in the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election. "State and local officials have done a tremendous job in protecting our free and fair elections."

So why all the worry? As Lydgate and anyone else who works in the pro-democracy field quickly notes, the big test —what Lydgate calls "the Super Bowl"—awaits in 2024.

Trump is running for the White House again and has been dominating the Republican primary as the first votes approach. He has called for pardoning those prosecuted for the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, continues to insist falsely that the 2020 election was "stolen" and says he will use the federal government to seek revenge on his political enemies.

Trump has used increasingly authoritarian rhetoric as he campaigns for the GOP nomination. If he wins, allies have been planning to seed the government with loyalists so the bureaucracy doesn't hinder Trump's more controversial plans the way it did during his first term.

It's gotten to the point that Trump was recently asked by conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt whether he planned to be a dictator: "Not at all," Trump responded. "No, I'm gonna rule as somebody that's very popular with the people."

The 2024 election could cause all sorts of conflict, including scenarios that have notably not materialized despite widespread concern since 2020: violence at the polls, overly aggressive partisan poll watchers or breakdowns in the ballot count.

It seems unlikely, though, that Trump could return to the White House if he loses the election. That's what he failed to accomplish in 2020, and he's in a weaker position now.

His strategy then was to use Republican dominance in swing state legislatures, governorships and secretary of state offices to try to send slates of fake electors to Congress even though Democrat Joe Biden won those states and captured the presidency.

Since then, Republicans have lost two of those swing state secretary of state offices—in Arizona and Nevada—as well as the governor's office in Arizona and control of the state legislatures in Michigan and Pennsylvania. In Congress, lawmakers passed a bipartisan bill closing some of the loopholes in the counting of Electoral College votes that Trump tried to exploit to stay in office, making it harder to challenge state certifications on the House floor.

Prosecutors urge appeals court to reject Trump's immunity claims in 2020 election subversion case

WASHINGTON (AP)—Special counsel Jack Smith urged a federal appeals court Saturday to reject former President Donald Trump's claims that he is immune from prosecution, saying the suggestion that he cannot be held to account for crimes in office "threatens the democratic and constitutional foundation" of the country.

The filing from Smith's team was submitted ahead of arguments next month on the legally untested question of whether a former president can be prosecuted for acts taken while in the White House.

Though the matter is now being considered by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, it's likely to come again before the Supreme Court, which earlier this month rejected prosecutors' request for a speedy ruling in their favor holding that Trump can be forced to stand trial on charges that he plotted to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

The outcome of the dispute is critical for both sides especially since the case has been effectively paused while Trump advances his immunity claims in the appeals court.

Prosecutors are hoping a swift judgment rejecting those arguments will restart the case and keep it on track for trial, currently scheduled for March 4 in federal court in Washington. But Trump's lawyers stand to benefit from a protracted appeals process that could significantly delay the case and potentially push it beyond the November election.

Trump's lawyers maintain that the appeals court should order the dismissal of the case, arguing that as a former president he is exempt from prosecution for acts that fell within his official duties as president.

Smith's team has said no such immunity exists in the Constitution or in case law and that, in any event, the actions that Trump took in his failed effort to cling to power aren't part of a president's official responsibilities.

The four-count indictment charges Trump with conspiring to disrupt the certification in Congress of electoral votes on Jan. 6, 2021, when rioters motivated by his falsehoods about the election results stormed the U.S. Capitol in a violent clash with police. It alleges that he participated in a scheme to enlist slates of fake electors in battleground states who would falsely attest that Trump had won those states and encouraged then-Vice President Mike Pence to thwart the counting of votes.

Those actions, prosecutors wrote, fall well outside a president's official duties and were intended solely to help him win reelection.

"A President who unlawfully seeks to retain power through criminal means unchecked by potential criminal prosecution could jeopardize both the Presidency itself and the very foundations of our democratic system of government officials to use fraudulent means to thwart the transfer of power and remain in office," Smith's team wrote.

In their brief, prosecutors also said that though the presidency plays a "vital role in our constitutional system," so, too, does the principle of accountability in the event of wrongdoing.

"Rather than vindicating our constitutional framework, the defendant's sweeping immunity claim threatens to license Presidents to commit crimes to remain in office," they wrote. "The Founders did not intend and would never have countenanced such a result."

Retirements could tip control of the House majority

WASHINGTON (AP)—A chaotic year for the House is coming to a close with more Democrats than Republicans deciding to leave the chamber, a disparity that could have major ramifications in next year's elections.

About two dozen Democrats have indicated they won't seek reelection, with half running for another elected office. Meanwhile, only 14 Republicans have said they are not seeking another term, with three seeking elected office elsewhere.

More retirements can be expected after the holidays, when lawmakers have had a chance to spend time with families and make decisions ahead of reelection deadlines. But so far, the numbers don't indicate the dysfunction in the House is causing a mass exodus for either party.

"Members sort of knew that this is what the institution is currently like when they chose to run for office," said Molly Reynolds, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a think tank that maintains a database of vital statistics on Congress, including retirements. "Some of them may well be feeling frustrated at this point in time, but anybody who has been elected to Congress in recent years, they're not surprised at what they're finding when they are getting to Washington."

Republicans certainly had the most high-profile exits. Rep. George Santos, R-N.Y., became only the third lawmaker to be expelled by colleagues since the Civil War. Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., was the first-ever speaker removed from that office by his colleagues. He opted to leave effective Dec. 31 rather than serve among the rank-and-file.

But it's the departure of a handful of Democrats in competitive districts that has Republicans thinking the overall retirement picture gives them an advantage in determining who will control the House after the 2024 elections.

Reps. Katie Porter of California, Elissa Slotkin of Michigan and Abigail Spanberger of Virginia proved they could win toss-up congressional districts in good election cycles for Democrats and not-so-good cycles. They are all seeking higher office within their home states. Porter and Slotkin are running for the U.S. Senate. Spanberger is running for governor in 2025.

Democrats are also losing six-term Rep. Dan Kildee of Michigan to retirement, leaving them with another competitive open seat to defend in a state that will be crucial in the presidential election. Rep. Jennifer Wexton, D-Va., is not seeking reelection due to health challenges in a district that leans Democratic but is more competitive than most.

On the other side of the aisle, the Republicans leaving office generally represent districts that Democrats have little chance of flipping. They'll be replaced by Republicans, predicted Rep. Richard Hudson, the chairman of the House Republican campaign arm.

"Retirements are a huge problem for the Democrats. They're not a problem for us," Hudson said.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

Taiwan's presidential candidates emphasize peace in relations with Beijing

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Taiwan's presidential candidates expressed desire for peaceful relations with Beijing, which has described Jan. 13 elections on the self-ruled island as a choice between war and peace and stepped up harassment of the territory that China claims as its own. William Lai, the front-runner and currently Taiwan's vice president from the ruling Democratic People's Party, said in a televised debate Saturday that he was open to communicating with the government in Beijing, which has refused to talk to him or President Tsai Ing-wen. Beijing favors the candidate from the more China-friendly Nationalist, or Kuomintang, Party, and has accused Lai and Tsai of being "separatists" who are trying to provoke a Chinese attack on Taiwan. Taiwan split from China amid civil war in 1949, but Beijing continues to regard the island of 23 million with its high-tech economy as Chinese territory and has been steadily increasing its threat to achieve that goal by military force if necessary. Tensions with China have featured strongly in the presidential campaign.

N. Korea's Kim vows to launch 3 more spy satellites and produce more nuclear materials in 2024

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to launch three additional military spy satellites, produce more nuclear materials and introduce attack drones in 2024, as he called for "overwhelming" war readiness to cope with U.S.-led confrontational moves, state media reported Sunday. Kim's comments, made during a key ruling Workers' Party meeting to set state goals for next year, suggest he'll intensify a run of weapons tests ahead of the U.S. presidential elections in November. Observers say Kim believes a boosted nuclear capability would give him another chance for high-stakes diplomacy with the U.S. to win sanctions relief if former President Donald Trump returns to the White House. During the five-day meeting that ended Saturday, Kim said "vicious" anti-North Korea moves by the United States and its followers "have reached the extremes unprecedented in history," pushing the Korean Peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. Kim cited the expansion of U.S.-South Korean military exercises and the temporary deployment of powerful U.S. military assets such as bombers and a nuclear-armed submarine in South Korea—the steps the allies have taken in response to the North's weapons testing spree since last year. Kim called for "the overwhelming war response capability" to deter potential enemy provocations, KCNA said. He set forth plans to launch three more military spy satellites next year in addition to the country's first reconnaissance satellite launched in November. He underscored the need to establish "a reliable foundation" to build more nuclear weapons, an apparent reference to facilities producing fissile materials like weapons-grade plutonium and highly enriched uranium. Kim also ordered authorities to enhance submarine capabilities and develop various types of unmanned combat equipment such as armed drones.

More Rohingya refugees arrive in Indonesia despite rejection from locals

MEDAN, Indonesia (AP)—Nearly 150 Rohingya refugees, mostly hungry and weak women and children, have reached a beach in Indonesia's North Sumatra province after weeks at sea, officials said Sunday. The group of 53 men, 39 women and 55 children arrived on Karang Gadih beach in Langkat district late Saturday, said the village head, Muhammad Amiruddin. A rickety, leaky wooden boat that brought them from Bangladesh was moored on a lighthouse island not far from the village, he said. Five among the refugees were sick after the long journey and residents gave them food and water while they waited for instructions from immigration and local officials to decide where to take them. Residents do not want the refugees in their communities, however, and last week many protested the recent Rohingya arrivals. "We helped them as they look very weak from hunger and dehydration," Amiruddin said. "But many residents cannot accept them to live in our village because they will only bring problems later." He said that one of the refugees told authorities that they sailed from the Cox Bazar refugee camp in Bangladesh to Indonesia and became stranded on a lighthouse island. About 740,000 Rohingya were resettled in Bangladesh after fleeing their homes in Myanmar to escape a brutal counterinsurgency campaign by security forces. But the camps in Bangladesh are squalid, with surging gang violence and rampant hunger, leading many to flee again.

Taliban say security forces killed dozens of Tajiks, Pakistanis involved in attacks in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AP)—Security forces in Afghanistan killed a number of Tajik and Pakistani nationals and arrested scores others involved in attacks against religious clerics, the public, and mosques, a senior Taliban official said Sunday. Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, Taliban's appointed defense minister, during a press conference in the capital, Kabul, said dozens of Tajiks and more than 20 Pakistanis were killed in the past 12 months "in operations by security forces." He said scores of Tajiks and hundreds of Pakistanis involved in various incidents were also arrested during that period. Mujahid called on neighboring and regional countries to strictly monitor their borders. Tensions between Kabul and Islamabad spiked as hundreds of thousands of Afghans left Pakistan after authorities started pursuing foreigners they said were in the country illegally, going door-to-door to check migrants' documentation, following an Oct.31 deadline. Mujahid also said there has been a 90% decrease in attacks by an Islamic State group affiliate in the past year. The militant group has carried out major assaults on schools, hospitals, and mosques, and has also attacked Shiite areas across the country.

Bus collides head-on with truck in central India, killing at least 13

NEW DELHI (AP)—A bus caught fire after colliding head-on with a truck on a highway in central India, killing at least 13 people, police said on Thursday. Twelve bus passengers died in the blaze and the truck driver was killed by the impact of the accident in Guna district in Madhya Pradesh state on Wednesday night, said police officer Anoop Bhargava. Another 16 people suffered burns or bone fractures and were taken to a hospital, Bhargava said. The region is nearly 900 kilometers (565 miles) south of New Delhi. Deadly road accidents are common in India, often due to reckless driving, poorly maintained roads and aging vehicles. More than 110,000 people are killed every year in road accidents across India, according to police.

World

Israel strikes in Khan Younis kill at least 35

AP

Palestinians visit the graves of people killed in the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip and buried inside the Shifa Hospital grounds in Gaza City, Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023.

» As Netanyahu says war will continue for months

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP)—Israeli strikes in central Gaza killed at least 35 people Sunday, hospital officials said, as fighting raged across the tiny enclave a day after Israel's prime minister said the war will continue for "many more months," resisting international calls for a cease-fire.

The military said Israeli forces were operating in Gaza's second-largest city, Khan Younis, and residents reported strikes in the central region, the latest focus of the nearly three-month air-and-ground war that has raised fears of a regional conflagration.

The U.S. military said its forces shot and killed several Iran-backed Houthi rebels when they tried to attack a cargo ship in the Red Sea, an escalation in a maritime conflict linked to the war. And an Israeli Cabinet minister suggested encouraging Gaza's population to emigrate, remarks that could worsen tensions with Egypt and other friendly Arab states.

Israel says it wants to destroy Hamas' governing and military capabilities in Gaza, from where it launched its Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. The militants killed some 1,200 people after breaking through Israel's extensive border defenses, shattering its sense of security. They also captured around 240 hostages, nearly half of whom were released during a temporary cease-fire agreement in November.

Just after midnight on New Year's Day, Hamas militants fired a barrage of rockets, setting off air raid sirens in southern and central Israel. No injuries were reported.

Displaced Palestinians found little to celebrate on New Year's Eve in Muwasi, a makeshift camp in a mostly undeveloped area of southern Gaza's Mediterranean coast designated by Israel as a safe zone.

"From the intensity of the pain we live, we do not feel that there is a new year," said Kamal al-Zeinaty, huddled with his family around a fire inside a tent. "All the days are the same."

Another relative, Zeyad al-Zeinaty, who fled with the family from the Jabaliya refugee camp in northern Gaza, said his wife, brother and grandchildren are among many relatives he has lost in the war.

Shelling kills 21 in Belgorod following Moscow's aerial attacks across Ukraine

Shelling in the center of the Russian border city of Belgorod Saturday killed 21 people, including three children, local officials reported.

A further 110 people were wounded in the strike, said regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov, making it one of the deadliest attacks on Russian soil since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine 22 months ago.

Russian authorities accused Kyiv of carrying out the attack, which took place the day after an 18-hour aerial bombardment across Ukraine killed at least 41 civilians.

Images of Belgorod on social media showed burning cars and plumes of black smoke rising among damaged buildings as air raid sirens sounded. One strike hit close to a public ice rink in the very heart of the city, which lies 25 miles (40 kilometers) north of the Ukrainian border and 415 miles (670 kilometers) south of Moscow. While previous attacks have hit the city, they have rarely taken place in daylight and have claimed fewer lives.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it identified the ammunition used in the strike as Czech-made Vampire rockets and Olkha missiles fitted with cluster-munition warheads. It provided no additional information, and The Associated Press was unable to verify its claims.

"This crime will not go unpunished," the ministry said in a statement on social media.

The Kremlin said Russian President Vladimir Putin had been briefed on the situation, and that the country's health minister, Mikhail Murashko, was ordered to join a delegation of medical personnel and rescue workers traveling to Belgorod from Moscow.

Russian diplomats also called for a meeting of the U.N. Security Council in connection with the strike. Speaking to Russia's state news agency, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Britain and the United States were guilty of encouraging Kyiv to carry out what she described as a "terrorist attack." She also placed blame on EU countries who had supplied Ukraine with weapons. ***(AP)***

Overdrive

As Leaf falls, Nissan springs forward with Ariya

By BARRY SPYKER
Tribune News Service

December marked 13 years since Nissan introduced the world's first mass-market electric vehicle. At its inception the Leaf was ugly—only its maker could love it—and it had an EPA-estimated range of just 73 miles.

While it was a pioneer, the Leaf was never a sales giant in the U.S., and now it appears the Japanese carmaker will end its production.

But no matter. Nissan has turned over a new leaf with the 2023 Ariya, the company's first battery-electric crossover SUV. The EPA calls it a small wagon, but few others do.

Long-awaited due to myriad supply-chain and factory issues, the Ariya launches the Nissan brand into a more upscale arena with stylish looks, quality cabin materials and craftsmanship, and higher-end than usual features for this segment. Some say it could have worn the badge of Infiniti, Nissan's luxury brand.

Nissan says Ariya redefines its current design philosophy inside and out, calling it "timeless Japanese futurism." That translates to sleeker, minimalist designs in an electric package.

A gloss-black grille looks more like a shield with 3-D *kumiko* pattern (Japanese design technique) beneath it. At center is Nissan's new logo, softly glowing with 20 LEDs. Dramatic strips of LED headlamps and running lights streak from the front corners. A long roofline reaches into the rear deck, and a single light blade stretches across the rear.

Japanese styling cues are found inside, too, with kumiko patterns on the speaker grilles and even the floor mats.

JAY MCNALLYMCNALLY MULTI MEDIA

The 2023 Nissan Ariya, the company's first battery-electric crossover SUV.

Other interesting concepts include a motorized center armrest for driver comfort and added leg room for rear passengers. Then there's the slide-out table from under the dashboard that, Nissan says, can be used as a "mobile office or on-the-go picnic table" while waiting for a charge. Truth is, it's a clever idea but cumbersome and too small for anything but a snack.

When it comes to power and range, Ariya's seven trim levels mean lots of options: front-wheel or all-wheel-drive, single or dual motor, 63 kWh battery or the higher-capacity 87 kWh. The single motor and bigger battery brings the top range to a reported 304 miles.

Equipped as such, the tested Ariya Empower+ is a sweet ride but not too powerful, producing 238 horsepower and 221 pound-feet of torque. It reaches 60 mph in around 7 seconds. For comparison, a dual-motor Ariya with AWD (called e-4orce) sprints to 60 more quickly at 5.6 seconds, but it'll cost around 30 miles of range: It gets 389 hp and 442 pound-feet of torque.

In all its forms, Ariya has strong, steady acceleration and a smooth and quiet ride around town or on the highway. Handling on corners and curves is impressive, partly due to its responsive steering. But most of the credit goes to the battery pack under the center of the vehicle, giving it a low center of gravity plus near 50-50 front-to-rear weight distribution.

Three drive modes regulate performance, with Standard used for most driving, Eco for peak mileage and Sport for slightly more zip. It can tow a modest 1,500 pounds.

Braking is rather spongy but gets the job done. Or press the e-Step button for one-pedal driving, which regenerates energy to extend mileage. This one does not bring the Ariya to a full stop, as many do, but slows it to 5-7 mph. The final braking is on you. Some like the system; others prefer the assurance of self-braking.

Ariya also gets Nissan's newest version of driver-assist technology, called ProPilot 2.0, which allows hands-free driving on mapped roads and lane-centering on others. It expands on ProPilot Assist by also managing lane changes, passing and highway exiting.

A driver-alert monitor, however, tends to offer too many reminders to watch the road—sometimes when glancing at a traffic sign. Meanwhile, the voice recognition system likewise mistook passenger conversation a couple times for a voice command.

The Ariya comes with a 7.2-kW onboard charger that can get a full charge in 14 hours with a Level 2 charger. With a fast charger, Nissan says it will charge from 10-80 percent in 40 minutes. Those numbers aren't bad though some can do a little better.

In the end, the EPA says to expect 98 MPGe in combined driving; 105 city, 91 highway. Of course, results vary on multiple levels, like climate, speed, hills, and driving style.

Inside, a simple design and flat, open floor area (battery pack below) enhance Ariya's roominess. It's a beautiful five-seat cabin with ample headroom and legroom in front and rear.

Slim-profile Zero-Gravity seats up front are comfortable and supportive, including lumbar, and offer multiple adjustments to accommodate all sizes. They come in leather or a synthetic, and are heated and ventilated. Rear seats are heated, too.

In keeping with the minimalist concept, the primary control panel up front has no conventional switches but a row of touch-sensitive buttons integrated on a matte-finish wood strip on the dash. Clean and simple, they respond quickly with a subtle vibration to the touch.

The shifter is smooth and palm-sized, and has a nice feel, while the steering wheel is heated and offers power adjustment, too—not bad for this segment.

Cabin cooling seemed sluggish—at least for Sunbelt folks who sometimes need a quick cool. The AC, however, can be limited to specific zones to save energy.

Side-by-side 12.3-inch screens accommodate Ariya's infotainment and digital gauge cluster. The latter is reconfigurable and offers views of multiple driver-assist and safety features. There's also a head-up display.

The infotainment touchscreen is colorful, responsive and easy enough to use. It's compatible with Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and Amazon Alexa, and offers navigation, Wi-Fi hotspot, Bluetooth and four USB ports. Included in the Empower trim is wireless device charging and a premium sound system with 10 speakers accented by subtle lighting.

Ariya also is the first Nissan model to offer automatic software updates for its multimedia system, various electronics, chassis, climate operation and EV settings.

Meanwhile, there's plenty of room for sports equipment, groceries and baggage. Cargo capacity is 22.8 cubic feet, 59.7 with the rear seats folded. But there's no space under the front hood, or "frunk."

NUTS & BOLTS

- **MSRP**:$53,690
- **As tested (Empower+ FWD)**:$59,220 (Includes 19-inch alloys, carpeted floor mats, illuminated kick plates, ground and rear illumination, two-tone paint, destination charges)
- **What's all the excitement about? Nissan's first EV crossover SUV redefines the brand with style, higher-end features**
- **Powertrain**: Front-wheel-drive Empower gets a single motor good for 238 hp and 221 pound-feet of torque; juiced by a 87 kWh lithium-ion battery (dual motors and AWD available on other trims)
- **How's the performance? Not a sporty ride, but crisp steering and near 50-50 weight distribution give it impressive handling; smooth and quiet around town, 0-60 mph in around 7 seconds**
- **Fuel economy:** EPA-estimated 105 MPG-e city, 91 highway, for combined 98 MPG-e

A 'fatal' flash

By BOB WEBER
Tribune News Service

Q: Love your column and have learned a lot about cars from it. However, I was disappointed in your answer to N.M. from Brooklyn, Michigan, about his check engine light. N.M. said that his mechanic told him a flashing check engine light is "fatal." What? I had never heard that, and was disappointed that you didn't address it. What about that "fatal" flashing light?

D.S., Colorado Springs, Colorado

A: I was hoping someone would ask. A steady glowing check engine light indicates a problem that should be checked out soon, but the vehicle is still drivable. A flashing check engine light indicates that there's a major problem, which could cause engine damage. When you see it, drive to the nearest safe place, turn off the engine and have your vehicle towed.

■■■

Q. I'd like your opinion on replacing my car's fuel filter. I have a 2012 Subaru Legacy, and the owner's manual suggests replacing it at 60,000 miles. My local Subaru dealer said it was not necessary to replace the filter unless there was an issue with it, and said the labor involved to get to the filter was not worth the benefit of replacing it. Thoughts?

B.J, Hartford, Connecticut

A: The fuel filter/pump assembly is accessed from under the back seat. It will take at least an hour or more to replace. Thankfully the gas tank does not need to be removed. I feel that the owner's manual is the bible and suggest folks follow the commandments. But your Subaru dealer has seen lots of cars.

■■■

Q: You talked about rainwater on the window of a 2018 VW Golf. I had the same problem on a 2010 GM car. After many times of using air to clear the drain tube that didn't work, I found out that the rain tube was bad and had to be replaced. That worked. Thank you for your time and hope this will help.

P.H. Williamsburg, Virginia

A: Sometimes, digging a little deeper, we may find a broken part. Removing the trim from the B-pillar (the foremost between the windshield and door frame) may reveal the drain tube.

And here's another idea:

■■■

MOTORMOUTH

BY BOB WEBER

Tribune News Service

Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. Weber's work has appeared in professional trade magazines and various consumer publications including Consumer Guide *and* Consumers Digest. *Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

Q: My Mazda Miata suffered the same problem, water in the car after rain. Mazda also tried blowing air in and it didn't work, which is to be expected when leaves and other crud get in there. What does is the job is a trumpet cleaner.

D.G., Springfield, Massachusetts

A: Having played the trumpet as a boy and a bugle as a Boy Scout one would think that I had known of trumpet cleaners. I had to go online to see them.

Sometimes my readers are the best sources for solving stuff. Thanks, and to all and happy holidays.

Life & Style

'Wonka' ends year No. 1 at the box office; '23 sales reach $9B in post-COVID best

NEW YORK (AP)— Hollywood closed out an up and down 2023 with "Wonka" regaining No. 1 at the box office, strong sales for "The Color Purple" and an overall $9 billion in ticket sales that improved on 2022's grosses but fell about $2 billion shy of pre-pandemic norms.

Chalamet

The New Year's weekend box office this year lacked a true blockbuster. (This time last year, "Avatar: The Way of Water" was inundating theaters.) Instead, a wide array of films – among them "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," "The Boys in the Boat," "Migration," "Ferrari," "The Iron Claw" and "Anyone But You" – sought to break out over the year's most lucrative box-office corridor.

The top choice, though, remained "Wonka," Paul King's musical starring Timothée Chalamet as a young Willy Wonka. In its third weekend, the Warner Bros. release collected an estimated $24 million Friday through Sunday and $31.8 million factoring in estimates for the Monday holiday. That brings the film's domestical total to $142.5 million.

That bested Warner Bros.' own "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," which, like previous DC superhero films, is struggling. James Wan's "Aquaman" sequel starring Jason Momoa took in $19.5 million in its second weekend to bring its two-week haul to a modest $84.7 million including New Year's Day estimates.

The original "Aquaman," which ultimately surpassed $1.1 billion worldwide, had grossed $215.4 million over a similar period in 2018 – more than double that of the sequel. Internationally, "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" added $50.5 million.

Weekend sales only tell part of the story this time of year. From Christmas through New Year's, when kids are out of school and many adults aren't working, every day is like Saturday to film distributors.

"The Color Purple," Blitz Bazawule's adaptation of the 2005 stage musical from Alice Walker's novel, debuted on Monday and led all movies on Christmas with $18 million. Through the week, the Warner Bros. release has grossed $50 million, including $13 million Friday through Sunday. That's a strong start for the crowd-pleaser starring Fantasia Barrino, Taraji P. Henson and Danielle Brooks. Audiences gave it an "A" CinemaScore.

The roughly $100 million production, which boasts Oprah Winfrey, Steven Spielberg and Quincy Jones (all from the 1985 film) as producers, should play well through awards season. It's nominated for several Golden Globes and expected to be in the Oscar mix.

"We saw this opportunity to go wide at Christmas since there were so few movies and we were confident the movie would be well received," said Jeffrey Goldstein, distribution chief for Warner Bros. "Going into the competitive landscape that's so thin in January and February, the excitement of awards season could really help ignite a bigger box office."

Despite a blockbuster-less holiday frame, the last weekend of the year pushed the industry past $9 billion in box office for the year in U.S. and Canadian theaters for the first time since before the pandemic. Ticket sales on the year were up 21% from 2022, according to data firm Comscore.

Still, it was a mark that seemed more easily within reach during the summer highs of Barbenheimer when both "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" were breaking box-office records.

The enormous success of those two films changed the trajectory of Hollywood's 2023, but so did the monthslong actors and writers strikes. Those forced the postponement of some top films (most notably "Dune: Part Two"), diminishing an already patchwork fall lineup with few guaranteed ticket-sellers. One exception was the last-minute addition of "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour," which set a new record for concert films.

This year, Hollywood needed Swift and every penny to reach $9 billion. It crossed that threshold Saturday, with one day to spare. That total, though, still doesn't come close to the $11 billion-plus years that preceded the pandemic. The number of wide releases in 2023 came about 20 films shy of those released in 2019.

- "Wonka," $24 million.
- "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom," $19.5 million.
- "Migration," $17.2 million.
- "The Color Purple," $13 million.
- "Anyone But You," $9 million.
- "The Boys in the Boat," $8.3 million.
- "The Iron Claw," $5 million.
- "Ferrari," $4.1 million.
- "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes," $2.9 million.
- "The Boy and the Heron," $2.5 million.

Paula Abdul accuses Idol' producer of sexual assault

LOS ANGELES (AP)— Paula Abdul has accused former "American Idol" producer Nigel Lythgoe of sexually assaulting her in the early 2000s when she was a judge on the reality competition show, according to a new lawsuit.

Abdul

The lawsuit filed Friday in Los Angeles also accuses Lythgoe of sexually assaulting Abdul after she left "American Idol" and became a judge on Lythgoe's other competition show "So You Think You Can Dance."

The Associated Press generally does not identify alleged victims of sexual assault unless they come forward publicly, as Abdul has done.

In a statement Saturday, Abdul's lawyer Douglas Johnson applauded the singer and dancer for speaking out publicly.

"It was clearly a difficult decision to make, but Ms. Abdul knows that she stands both in the shoes and on the shoulders of many other similarly situated survivors, and she is determined to see that justice is done," Johnson said.

Lythgoe said in a statement that he was "shocked and saddened" to hear of the allegations made by Abdul, who he said he considered a "dear" and "entirely platonic" friend.

"While Paula's history of erratic behavior is well known, I can't pretend to understand exactly why she would file a lawsuit that she must know is untrue," Lythgoe said in the statement. "But I can promise that I will fight this appalling smear with everything I have."

The lawsuit states Abdul remained silent for years about the alleged assaults out of fear of retaliation by "one of the most well-known producers of television competition shows."

Before "American Idol" and "So You Think You Can Dance," on which Lythgoe served as a judge for 16 seasons, he was a producer on the British show "Pop Idol," which became a global franchise that includes the U.S. iteration starring Abdul.

According to the lawsuit, the first sexual assault occurred while Abdul and Lythgoe were on the road filming auditions for an earlier season of "American Idol," which premiered in 2002.

Kathy Griffin files for divorce ahead of 4th wedding anniversary

Griffin

LOS ANGELES (AP)— Comedian Kathy Griffin has filed for divorce from longtime partner Randy Bick just shy of the couple's fourth wedding anniversary.

Los Angeles Superior Court records show Griffin filed for divorce Thursday, citing irreconcilable differences.

The pair dated for several years before marrying on New Year's Day 2020. They have no children together, and Griffin's filing says a prenuptial agreement dictates how their assets should be divided.

Griffin, 63, was a star of the NBC series "Suddenly Susan" and poked fun at her celebrity on "My Life on the D-List."

Bick has worked as a marketing executive and began dating Griffin in 2011.

Griffin was previously married. She accused her former husband of stealing from her on "Larry King Live" in 2006, and says she put their troubles into her act.

The filing was first reported Friday by celebrity website TMZ.

Man wants to let friend know he's dating an ex

DEAR ABBY: I am a 40-plus-year-old single male. I recently started hanging out with one of my friend "Tom's" ex-girlfriends. It is now turning into more than friends. "Pam" and I both have feelings for each other. She and Tom dated for five months and broke up eight months ago.

Do I owe it to Tom to ask his permission or tell him I'm seeing her? Pam has asked me to not say anything and to let him find out on his own, which will happen because we have many mutual friends. I want to respect her choice. But also, as Tom's friend, I feel the right thing to do is tell him. Please advise. I'm stuck between her wishes and doing what I think is right.

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE IN IOWA

DEAR STUCK: Have a talk with Pam. Explain that you are not sure how Tom will react if he sees the two of you arm-in-arm with no warning. He may not care, but he also could be upset that you are dating and hid it from him. Then tell Pam that, in light of your friendship with Tom, you prefer being upfront because it's respectful and you don't like keeping secrets.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My mom died a couple of years ago and left behind many collectibles that are worth reselling. I am the oldest of five children and have spent the most time and effort moving out her collection, with a lot of help from two of my siblings, "some" help from one and absolutely none from another one.

In her last days, Mom mentioned not to "forget about the gold." She had collected some scrap gold that I sold for $900. I have been sorting through the remaining inventory with no help from any of my siblings. Is it wrong of me not to share that cash with them?

OVERWHELMED SIBLING

DEAR OVERWHELMED: If you truly felt comfortable pocketing the money, you wouldn't be asking me this question. Listen to your conscience and share the proceeds from the sale of the precious metal with your siblings. To leave one of them out would guarantee an estrangement.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: A friend of mine was asked to leave a restaurant after the check had been paid because people were waiting for tables, and he was highly insulted. My position was that it was courteous to leave because people were waiting to have their dinner. He felt the waitress had no right to ask their party to leave. What is your take on this?

COURTEOUS IN THE EAST

DEAR COURTEOUS: I consulted Priscilla, operations manager at my favorite restaurant in Beverly Hills, about your question. She explained that some restaurants have a 90-minute time limit for diners to leave the restaurant. (For larger parties, it can be up to 120 minutes.)

My take on this is that rather than making it the responsibility of the server to ask your friend to give up the table, the MANAGER should have come over and done it. It needn't be an unpleasant exchange. A manager may sometimes offer the patron a seat at the bar and a free drink or dessert in the name of good customer relations.

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

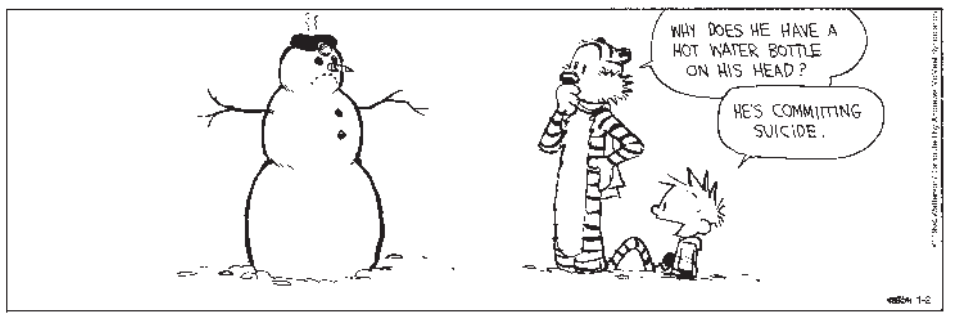
DEAR ABBY
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

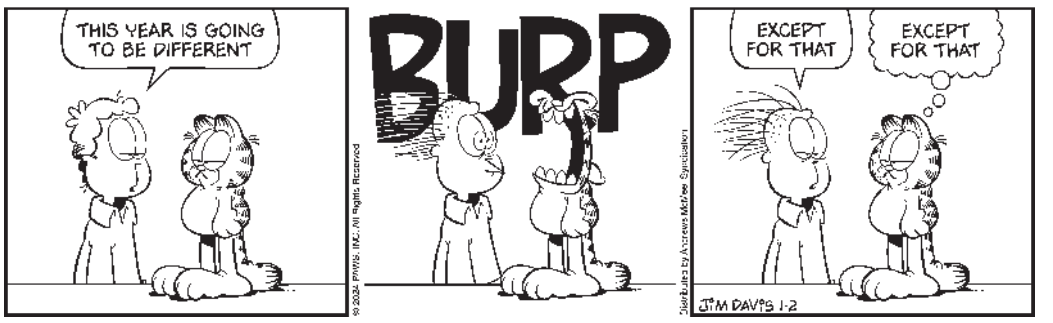
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



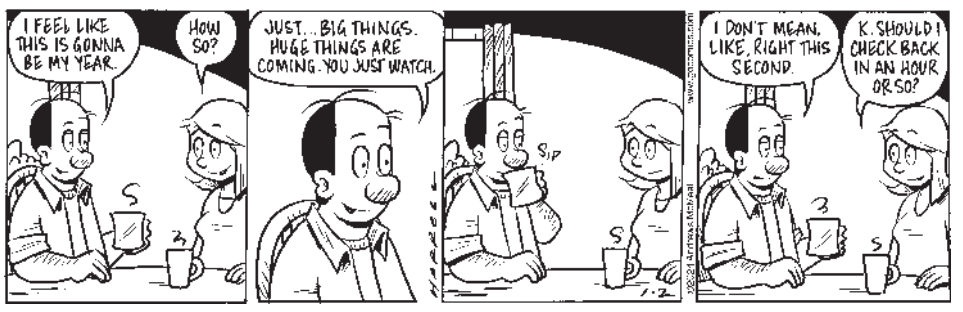
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



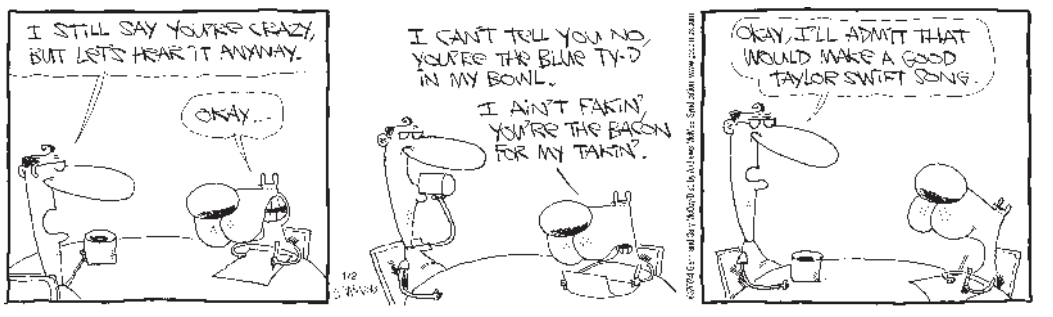
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


I FEEL LIKE THIS IS GONNA BE MY YEAR.
HOW SO?
JUST...BIG THINGS. HUGE THINGS ARE COMING. YOU JUST WATCH.
I DON'T MEAN, LIKE, RIGHT THIS SECOND.
K. SHOULD I CHECK BACK IN AN HOUR OR SO?

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


I STILL SAY YOU'RE CRAZY, BUT LET'S HEAR IT ANYWAY.
OKAY...
I CAN'T TELL YOU NO, YOU'RE THE BLUE TY-D IN MY BOWL.
I AIN'T FAKIN', YOU'RE THE BACON FOR MY TAKIN'.
OKAY, I'LL ADMIT THAT WOULD MAKE A GOOD TAYLOR SWIFT SONG.

CROSSWORD — BY EUGENE SHEFFER

ACROSS

1 Idle or Bana
5 Nick and Nora's pooch
9 Deli meat
12 Rip
13 Italian cheese, for short
14 Super serve
15 Family reunion footage, e.g.
17 Skillet
18 Nitwit
19 Speedy
21 Sneeze sound
24 Sly
25 Greek consonants
26 Table protector
30 Comic Notaro
31 Kelly of "One Tree Hill"
32 Yale grad
33 Chat
35 Stated
36 Heath
37 Back street
38 Mel who voiced Bugs Bunny
40 Faction
42 Oft-pierced body part
43 Kitchen appliance with beaters
48 Genesis vessel
49 Actress Falco
50 Skirt panel
51 German article
52 Bribes
53 Deception

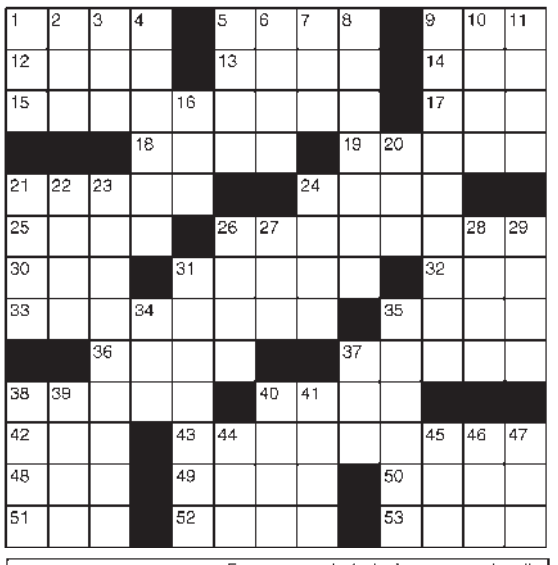
DOWN

1 Ordinal suffix
2 Old Olds
3 "— Spartacus!"
4 Beliefs
5 Per person
6 Feed the piggy bank
7 Part of TNT
8 "Barbie" actress Ferrera
9 McDonald's offering for kids
10 Antioxidant berry
11 Repair
16 Cattle call
20 Hearty quaff
21 Rental units (Abbr.)
22 Stylish
23 Kudos
24 Bit of merchandise
26 Indigent
27 Designer Claiborne
28 "I cannot tell —"
29 Spruced up
31 Sponges
34 Calendar abbr.
35 Santa's ride
37 USN bigwig
38 Rosary unit
39 News reporter Logan
40 Use scissors
41 "The — of March"
44 Ruckus
45 Tic-tac-toe loser
46 Mound stat
47 "Toy Story" dinosaur

Solution time: 22 mins.

B	M	W		C	C	I	I		I	I	N	A
C	O	O		O	U	S	I		C	D	E	R
C	O	R	A	L	S	E	A		T	E	X	T
		K	P	O	P			B	E	S	T	S
T	I	B	E	R		S	H	A	M			
A	D	O	S		C	L	U	B	S	O	D	A
L	E	O		R	H	Y	M	E		V	I	M
C	A	K	E	S	A	L	E		S	E	M	I
			I	T	T	Y		W	I	R	E	D
B	A	N	T	U			K	E	P	T		
U	I	A	H		C	A	L	L	S	I	G	N
C	A	V	E		S	A	U	L		M	O	A
S	T	I	R		I	S	M	S		E	T	C

Last Friday's Answer



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Kate Bosworth, 41; Dax Shepard, 49; Taye Diggs, 53; Cuba Gooding Jr., 56.

Happy Birthday: Practicality and planning go hand in hand. You stand to prosper this year if you rely on yourself instead of letting others dictate what you can do. Use your energy to tighten up your routine and to ensure that everything in your life is in conjunction with efficiency. Invest in what saves you money, time and frustration, and everything else will fall into place. Take control and make productivity your priority. Your numbers are 3, 11, 22, 28, 31, 34, 45.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Research before you open your wallet. Knowledge can be a saving grace when money is involved. Don't be shy; ask questions, consider your needs and don't feel obligated to follow in someone's footsteps. Make decisions that reflect your physical, emotional and financial situations. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Tally your assets and liabilities before you start spending, alter your lifestyle or switch jobs. Having a clear picture regarding prospects, marketability and financial stability will help you avoid a premature move that can jeopardize your reputation. Unnecessary risks will fall short of your expectations. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Keep an open mind, but don't set yourself up for disappointment. Someone's ideas may sound good, but when decision time arrives, you should define what works best for you before proceeding. Refuse to take on an expense due to someone else's miscalculation. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Bypass anyone who chooses not to meet you halfway. Your time and knowledge are worth more than being caught in a faceoff. Step into the light, and it will become evident where your efforts are most appreciated by others. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Silence is golden when opposition prevails. Use your energy wisely, and you can calm situations by setting a good example. The truth will come out, and you will shine like a diamond in the rough; patience, continuity and common sense will guide you to victory. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: When in doubt, research; you'll find a solution. Refuse to let discord fester at home or within partnerships that can cost you mentally, emotionally or financially. Be blatantly honest, and it will be difficult for those offering false information to stand in your way. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): By physically preparing, you will build momentum and find the will to enforce what you want rather than trust outside influences. Don't let a roadblock at home stand in your way; look for alternatives and adjust whatever doesn't fit your plans or budget. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Don't offer to share or pay for others. Listen carefully, assess the situation, get the facts and ask tough questions. The information you gather will spark your imagination and encourage insightful suggestions that help and allow you to avoid responsibilities that don't belong to you. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Pay attention to your well-being. Refuse to let outside influences play with your emotions or lump you into a group that no longer matches your desires. Pay attention to the shift going on around you. ✪✪

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Listen, verify information and decide what works for you. Relying on others to tell you what you need or how much you should spend will leave you feeling vulnerable. Look at your options, and you'll find scenarios that benefit you. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Observe, but don't jump into something based on someone else's vision and hype. Keep your life and decisions simple and doable, and it will ease stress and help you focus on what makes you happy. Avoid anything that sets you back or damages your reputation. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Put your time and money where it counts. Don't take a risk that can lead to injury or illness. Work alone or update documents, contracts and subscriptions. Getting your affairs in order will allow you the freedom to forge ahead. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are complex, curious and thorough. You are adaptable and reserved.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

				1				
				4	3	9		8
4	3				5	1	2	7
	5		1		9	2		
2	1		5				7	9
	8			2	7	3		5
1		8	3	5				
	4				1			
3		7	8	9	2	4		

Difficulty: ★★ 1/2

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

2	1	8	6	5	4	3	9	7
7	5	3	2	1	9	4	8	6
6	4	9	3	8	7	2	5	1
1	9	2	7	4	6	5	3	8
3	8	6	5	2	1	9	7	4
5	7	4	8	9	3	1	6	2
9	2	7	4	6	5	8	1	3
4	6	1	9	3	8	7	2	5
8	3	5	1	7	2	6	4	9

Difficulty: ★★★★ 12229

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

ABSORPTION Solution: 8 letters

C	N	E	M	U	L	O	V	I	T	A	M	I	N	S
H	O	H	Y	D	R	A	T	E	C	A	P	S	O	P
L	I	T	M	E	D	I	C	A	L	A	K	L	H	I
O	T	D	T	D	R	Ⓚ	I	S	O	I	U	O	E	L
R	S	S	O	O	Ⓐ	U	U	S	N	T	T	S	R	L
I	E	F	K	Ⓞ	N	R	T	P	E	O	N	E	U	I
N	G	W	Ⓢ	C	F	N	H	S	N	O	S	C	T	G
E	I	A	F	A	O	A	U	D	I	E	F	N	A	H
E	D	T	C	R	R	S	U	T	R	O	S	E	R	T
Y	C	E	I	M	S	S	W	O	R	O	M	I	E	N
G	L	R	A	P	M	O	P	M	E	I	P	C	P	E
R	A	C	O	O	L	A	H	E	A	T	E	S	M	V
E	Y	N	T	F	V	R	O	X	Y	G	E	N	E	L
N	G	A	S	E	S	L	A	R	E	N	I	M	T	O
E	G	A	D	N	A	B	L	O	O	D	N	U	O	S

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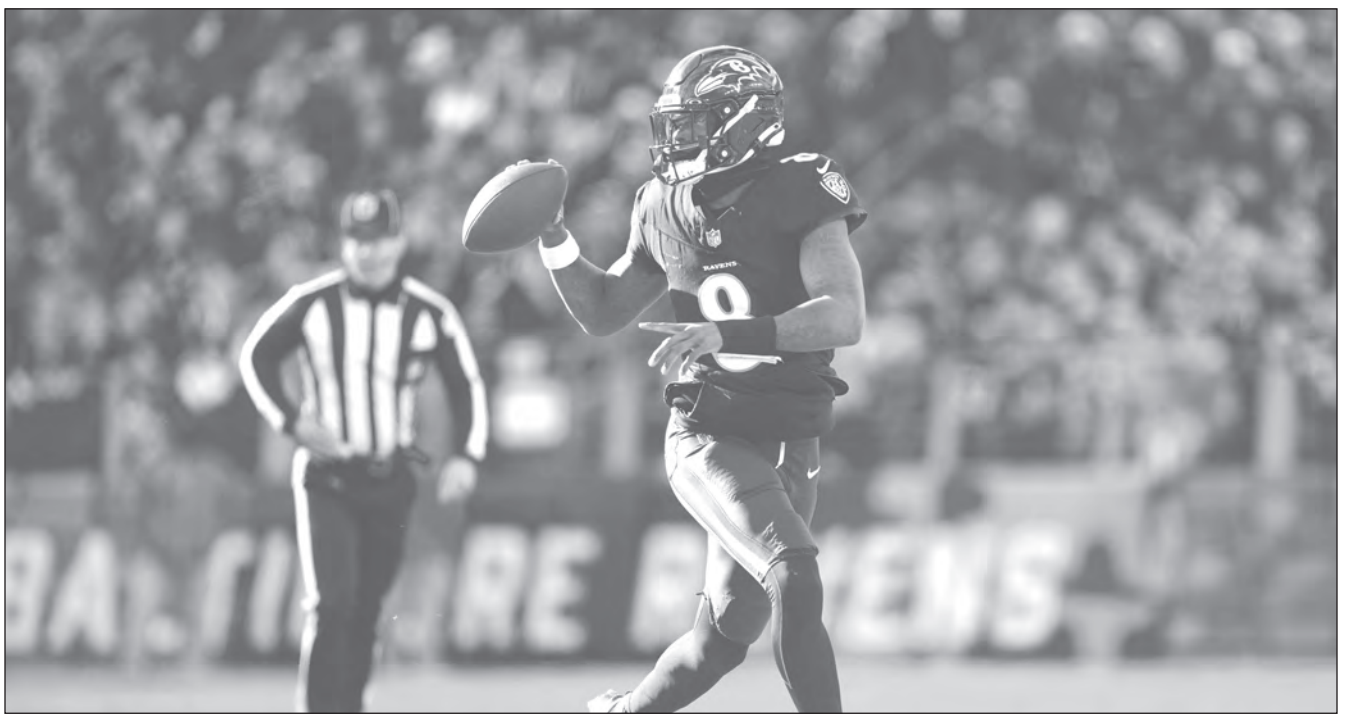
Atoms, Bandage, Blood, Chlorine, Clay, Cotton, Digestion, Drops, Energy, Flow, Food, Force, Form, Gases, Heat, Hydrate, Ions, Iron, Light, Medical, Minerals, Moisture, Nutrients, Oxygen, Pharmacy, Photon, Pores, Science, Skin, Soak, Soap, Socks, Solute, Solvent, Sound, Space, Spill, Sponge, Surface, Temperature, Vapor, Vitamins, Volume, Water

Last Friday's Answer: Fondue

To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 66 through 76, order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Jackson leads Ravens in rout of Dolphins to clinch AFC top seed



AP

Baltimore Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson (8) looks to pass as he scrambles against the Miami Dolphins during the first half of an NFL football game in Baltimore, Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023.

BALTIMORE (AP)—In what may have been his final bid for the MVP award, Lamar Jackson threw for 321 yards and five touchdowns, finishing with a perfect passer rating and helping the Baltimore Ravens clinch the top seed in the AFC with a 56-19 rout of the Miami Dolphins on Sunday.

Isaiah Likely caught two TDs for the Ravens, who won their sixth straight game and also wrapped up their first AFC North title since 2019, Jackson's first MVP season. Now Baltimore (13-3) can rest Jackson—and anyone else it chooses—in the regular-season finale against Pittsburgh.

Miami (11-5) is also postseason bound, but now the winner of next weekend's Dolphins-Bills game will take the AFC East. And now the Dolphins face a potentially significant injury. Linebacker Bradley Chubb—with his team down 30 points—had to be carted off with 3:05 remaining after hurting his knee.

Serenaded with periodic "MVP!" chants from the home crowd, Jackson went 18 of 21 passing.

49ERS 27, COMMANDERS 10

LANDOVER, Md. (AP)—Brock Purdy bounced back from the worst game of his career to throw two touchdown passes, and San Francisco clinched the top seed in the NFC by beating Washington.

Philadelphia's stunning home loss to Arizona, combined with Detroit's defeat at Dallas on Saturday, allowed the 49ers (12-4) to secure a first-round bye and home-field advantage.

Washington (4-12) wasn't much of an obstacle for the Niners, whose only concern could be the status of Christian McCaffrey. Their do-it-all running back left the game in the third quarter with a right calf injury after gaining 91 scrimmage yards on 18 touches.

San Francisco also got touchdown catches from Deebo Samuel and Brandon Aiyuk and a rushing TD from Elijah Mitchell. Purdy, coming off throwing four interceptions in a humbling home loss to Baltimore, was 22 of 28 for 230 yards to reach 4,280 and break Jeff Garcia's franchise record of 4,278 set in 2000.

CHIEFS 25, BENGALS 17

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—Harrison Butker was a career-best 6 for 6 on field-goal attempts and Kansas City rallied past Cincinnati to win the AFC West for the eighth straight season.

Patrick Mahomes had 245 yards passing and a touchdown for Kansas City (10-6), which also secured the AFC's No. 3 seed and at least one home playoff game. Isiah Pacheco ran 18 times for 130 yards while Rashee Rice had five catches for 127 yards.

The Bengals (8-8) led by 10 early but found themselves trailing 25-17 when Butker hit the last of his field goals—a 46-yarder through blustery wind—with 2:59 remaining in the game.

With one last chance, Jake Browning hit Tyler Boyd to convert a long fourth down and get into Kansas City territory, but back-to-back sacks by George Karlaftis and Chris Jones gave the Chiefs eight on the day and ended the Bengals' comeback hopes.

CARDINALS 35, EAGLES 31

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—James Conner ran for a 2-yard touchdown with 32 seconds remaining, Kyler Murray threw three TD passes, and Arizona rallied from a 15-point deficit to stun Philadelphia.

The Eagles (11-5) could have won the NFC East with wins against Arizona and the New York Giants next week. Now, Dallas can win the division with a win next week at Washington, and San Francisco has locked up the top seed in the conference.

Jalen Hurts, who threw three touchdown passes, was picked off in the end zone on a desperate heave to end the game.

Murray finished 25 of 31 for 232 yards and got stronger as the game progressed, overcoming a 99-yard pick-6 by Sydney Brown early in the second quarter. Conner rushed for 128 yards on 26 carries for the Cardinals (4-12).

PACKERS 33, VIKINGS 10

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Jordan Love threw three touchdown passes and ran for a score, and Green Bay took control of its playoff fate by pounding Minnesota.

Aaron Jones rushed for 120 yards and Jayden Reed had two touchdown catches for the Packers (8-8), who can get the NFC's last wild-card spot by beating Chicago at home next week. They moved into playoff position when Seattle lost to Pittsburgh earlier in the day.

Love went 24 for 33 for 256 yards.

The Vikings (7-9) benched quarterback Jaren Hall at halftime after he threw an interception and lost a fumble, both of which the Packers converted into touchdowns. Nick Mullens took over, the fifth time the Vikings have switched QBs since Kirk Cousins tore his Achilles tendon during a win at Green Bay on Oct. 29.

BILLS 27, PATRIOTS 21

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP)—Josh Allen ran for two touchdowns, cornerback Rasul Douglas returned one of his two interceptions for a score, and Buffalo beat New England, setting up a showdown at Miami next weekend for the AFC East title.

The three-time division champion Bills (10-6) have already defeated the Dolphins (11-5) this season, and Miami blew a chance at clinching the division title by getting blown out at Baltimore.

Buffalo won its fourth straight and fifth in six games. The Bills gave up Jalen Reagor's 98-yard return of the opening kickoff for a touchdown and settled for a touchdown and two field goals off three takeaways inside the Patriots 30. Allen concluded the opening drive of the third quarter with his second rushing TD— his 15th of the season—and the Bills held on from there.

SAINTS 23, BUCCANEERS 13

TAMPA, Fla. (AP)—Derek Carr threw for 197 yards and two touchdowns, and New Orleans moved into a tie atop the NFC South by halting Tampa Bay's four-game winning streak.

Carr tossed TD passes of 4 yards to Juwan Johnson and 22 yards to Taysom Hill in the first half. The Saints' defense did its part to keep the Bucs (8-8) from clinching their third consecutive division title by intercepting Baker Mayfield twice and forcing a pair of fumbles.

Tampa Bay can still repeat as NFC South champion by winning at division rival Carolina next week. The Saints (8-8) close with a division game at home against Atlanta.

RAMS 26, GIANTS 25

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—Kyren Williams ran for 87 yards and a career-best three touchdowns, and Los Angeles beat New York, clinching a playoff berth hours later when Seattle lost to Pittsburgh.

Matthew Stafford threw for 317 yards and a touchdown but also had his first two interceptions in the last five games as the Rams (9-7) held on to win their third straight and sixth of seven.

Gunner Olszewski scored on a 94-yard punt return to get New York (5-11) within a point with 3:27 to play. After an encroachment penalty on the extra point attempt, coach Brian Daboll elected to go for a 2-point conversion — but Tyrod Taylor missed a wide-open Saquon Barkley.

Later, a 31-yard run by Taylor allowed Mason Crosby to attempt a game-winning 54-yard field goal, but it was short. Taylor threw for 319 yards and a touchdown in his first start since replacing Tommy DeVito.

STEELERS 30, SEAHAWKS 23

SEATTLE (AP)—Najee Harris rushed for a season-high 122 yards and bullied his way into the end zone for a pair of touchdowns, and Pittsburgh beat Seattle to keep its playoff hopes alive.

Using a punishing running attack that faced little resistance from Seattle, the Steelers (9-7) ensured that coach Mike Tomlin would finish a 17th straight season with a record of .500 or better.

The Seahawks (8-8) had their two-game win streak snapped and while they weren't eliminated from the postseason, they will need a victory and a lot of help in Week 18.

Harris averaged 4.5 yards per carry and reached the 100-yard mark for the first time since Week 17 of last season against Baltimore. Jaylen Warren added another 75 yards rushing and scored on a 18-yard run in the first quarter.

Pittsburgh finished with 202 yards rushing and a season-high 468 total yards. It became the sixth straight opponent to rush for at least 135 yards against the Seahawks.

JAGUARS 26, PANTHERS 0

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP)—Travis Etienne scored twice, including a 62-yard TD that was his longest run of the season, and Jacksonville blanked Carolina to end a four-game skid.

The Jaguars (9-7) won for the first time in December—and with quarterback Trevor Lawrence watching from the sideline—to set up a regular-season finale at Tennessee that will help decide the AFC South.

Jacksonville can clinch the division with a victory next weekend. A loss to the Titans would hand the AFC South to the winner of the Houston-Indianapolis game.

Lawrence missed the game with a sprained throwing shoulder, ending his consecutive starts streak at 51. C.J. Beathard completed 17 of 24 passes for 178 yards without a turnover in his first start since 2020.

TEXANS 26, TITANS 3

HOUSTON (AP)—C.J. Stroud threw for 213 yards and a touchdown in his return from a concussion, and Houston rolled past Tennessee.

Houston (9-7), Indianapolis and Jacksonville all won Sunday to leave the three teams with identical records in the AFC South. A victory next week at Indianapolis will guarantee the Texans, who won just three games last season, their first postseason berth since 2019.

The Texans had a 17-point lead at halftime with some help from defensive tackle Sheldon Rankins, who returned a fumble by rookie quarterback Will Levis for a score in the second quarter.

COLTS 23, RAIDERS 20

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—Gardner Minshew threw a touchdown pass, Jonathan Taylor ran for a score, and two late defensive penalties helped Indianapolis beat Las Vegas to stay in the AFC playoff chase.

Indy (9-7) remained in a first-place tie atop the AFC South with Houston and Jacksonville. The Colts host the Texans next week.

The Raiders (7-9) had their two-game winning streak end and were eliminated from the postseason.

Minshew finished 15 of 23 for 224 yards. Taylor had 21 carries for a season-high 96 yards.

BEARS 37, FALCONS 17

CHICAGO (AP)—Justin Fields threw for 268 yards with a touchdown pass and a rushing TD in what could be his final home game for Chicago, which dealt Atlanta's playoff hopes a big blow.

D.J. Moore finished with nine catches for 159 yards and a touchdown, and Khalil Herbert ran for 124 yards and a score as the Bears (7-9) overwhelmed the Falcons (7-9).

Chicago grabbed a 21-7 halftime lead and rolled to its fourth win in five games. The Bears intercepted Taylor Heinicke three times and Desmond Ridder once.

BRONCOS 16, CHARGERS 9

DENVER (AP)—Jarrett Stidham threw for 224 yards and a touchdown in his first start in place of the benched Russell Wilson, and Denver beat Los Angeles.

Stidham earned his first career win as a starter thanks to some timely plays such as a nifty 54-yard catch-and-run for a score by Lil'Jordan Humphrey and a stellar defensive performance. The Broncos (8-8) forced one turnover, allowed two third-down conversions on 11 attempts and kept the Chargers (5-11) out of the end zone.

Denver was eliminated from the playoffs because Kansas City beat Cincinnati.

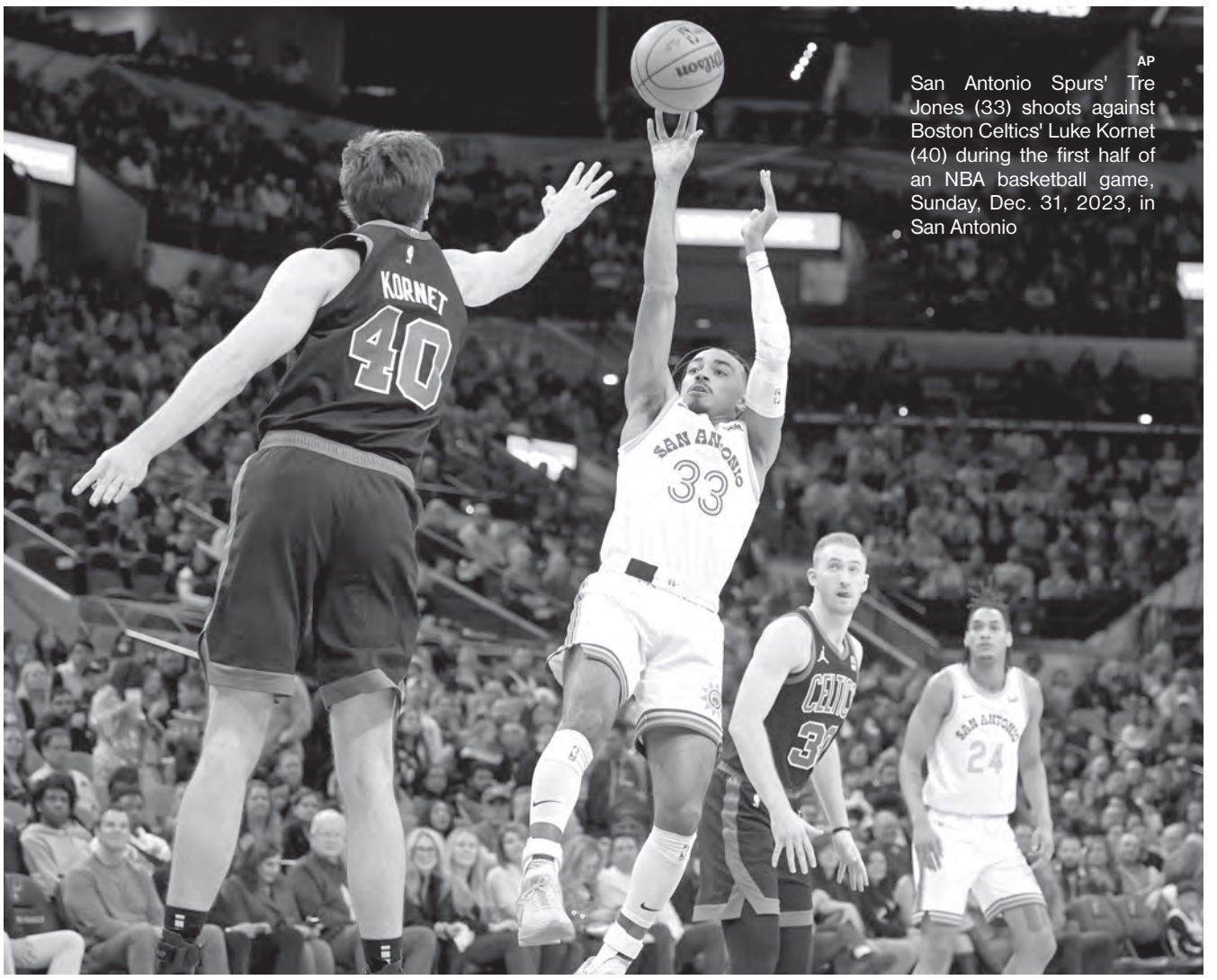
NBA-leading Celtics beats Spurs 134-101 for 6th straight victory

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Jayson Tatum scored 25 points, Jaylen Brown added 24 and the NBA-leading Boston Celtics extended their winning streak to six games with a 134-101 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Sunday night.

Derrick White scored 17 points against his former team, and Kristaps Porzingis added 14 points and nine rebounds in his return after missing a game because of a calf injury.

Devin Vassell scored 22 points for San Antonio. Victor Wembanyama had 21 points and seven rebounds for San Antonio. The Spurs have lost seven of eight.

Boston improved to 26-6, going 12-2 in December.



AP

San Antonio Spurs' Tre Jones (33) shoots against Boston Celtics' Luke Kornet (40) during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Sunday, Dec. 31, 2023, in San Antonio

PELICANS 129, LAKERS 109

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Zion Williamson and Brandon Ingram each scored 26 points and New Orleans beat road-weary Los Angeles.

Los Angeles was coming off a 108-106 loss at Minnesota on Saturday night, while New Orleans was off two days after beating Utah at home Thursday night.

LeBron James scored 34 points and former Pelican Anthony Davis added 20 points and 10 rebounds, but they didn't get enough help as the Lakers lost for the seventh time in nine games.

The meeting was the first since the Lakers dismantled New Orleans 133-89 in the In-Season Tournament semifinal in Las Vegas on Dec. 7.

SUNS 112, MAGIC 107

PHOENIX (AP)—Kevin Durant scored 31 points, Bradley Beal added a season-high 25 and Phoenix beat Orlando for its third straight victory.

Beal was playing in just his eighth game this season because of back and ankle injuries. The three-time All-Star—acquired in an offseason trade with Washington—shot 10 of 13 from the field, including a powerful dunk in the third quarter.

Durant shot 12 of 21 from the field and added five rebounds and five assists. Devin Booker scored 21 points and Jusuf Nurkic had 19 points and 13 rebounds. The Suns' backups scored only six points, all by Chimezie Metu.

Paolo led Orlando with 28 points. Franz Wagner added 27.

THUNDER 124, NETS 108

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 24 points and six assists and Oklahoma City beat Brooklyn for its fourth straight victory.

Josh Giddey had 20 points, six rebounds and five assists, and rookie Chet Holmgren added 18 points, 10 rebounds and two blocked shots. Oklahoma City improved to 22-9, good for second place in the Western Conference.

Mikal Bridges had 22 points—15 in the first quarter—to go with seven rebounds and seven assists for Brooklyn. The Nets have lost three straight.

KINGS 123, GRIZZLIES 92

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Malik Monk scored 27 points, Domantas Sabonis added 13 points, 21 rebounds and 12 assists for a triple-double and Sacramento routed Memphis.

Monk was 10 of 13 from the field and missed just one of his five 3-point shots. Sabonis had his sixth triple-double of the season.

Jaren Jackson led Memphis with 18 points. Desmond Bane, Ja Morant and Luke Kennard had with 17 points apiece. The Grizzlies have lost three in a row.

HAWKS 130, WIZARDS 126

WASHINGTON (AP)—Trae Young had 40 points and 13 assists, Dejounte Murray scored 32 points and Atlanta overcame a slow start to beat Washington.

Jalen Johnson added a career-high 24 points and had 13 rebounds.

Kyle Kuzma scored 38 points and hit seven 3-pointers for Washington.

Goran Dragic announces his retirement after a 15-year NBA career

MIAMI (AP)—Goran Dragic, a former All-Star guard with the Miami Heat and the leader of Slovenia's team that won the EuroBasket championship in 2017, announced his retirement on Sunday.

Dragic spent 15 seasons in the NBA and played for seven teams—Phoenix, Houston, Chicago, Brooklyn, Milwaukee, Toronto and the Heat. He was part of the All-NBA team in 2013-14, the same season in which he was voted the league's most improved player, and made his lone All-Star appearance in 2018.

"I have lived my greatest dream and I am extremely grateful for the countless people in my life who have enabled me to play this long," Dragic said. "It starts with my parents, Marinko and Mojca, my brother, Zoran, my kids, Mateo and Vikorita and their mother Maja, and the rest of my family who always allowed this passion of basketball to be a priority for me."

Dragic intends to have a retirement celebration this summer in Ljubljana, Slovenia, likely after the Paris Olympics conclude. There are tentative plans to announce details of that celebration later this week.

The 37-year-old Dragic spoke often in recent years about what the 2017 EuroBasket win meant to him, especially considering that it is generally considered to be Slovenia's finest moment in team sports. Dragic averaged 22.6 points and 5.1 assists in the nine games at that tournament and finished off the gold with 35 points in the title game win over rival Serbia, his father's homeland. Slovenia is his mother's homeland.

He became a national hero, receiving one of Slovenia's highest civilian honors after that tournament, and was brought to tears by a gift of a jersey from the mother of one of his idols, the late star Drazen Petrovic.

"It was everything," Dragic said.

A young guard on that 2017 Slovenia team that Dragic mentored: Dallas Mavericks star Luka Doncic.

"It was an amazing run for him," Doncic said Saturday, when word began to leak out of Europe that Dragic's retirement announcement was imminent. "I'm just glad I know him, I'm glad I played with him and man, I learned a lot about him, especially about leadership in that tournament."

Dragic was beloved in Miami, where he and his family continue to maintain homes. When he was a free agent in 2020, the Heat surprised Dragic with billboards in his native Slovenia, with slogans such as "Your second family is always with you." That gesture, Dragic said, was deeply moving and led to him quickly re-signing with the Heat.

The left-handed Dragic was the 45th overall pick in the 2008 draft by San Antonio. He averaged 13.3 points and 4.7 assists in his career, and averaged 20 points in a season twice—in 2013-14 with Phoenix, and 2016-17 with the Heat.

He helped Miami reach the NBA Finals in 2020, the season that ended in the bubble at Walt Disney World because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dragic hurt his foot early in that series and appeared in only two games, an injury that seriously impacted Miami's chances at a title.

"Can you do something for me?" he asked a reporter when that series against the Los Angeles Lakers ended, the Heat having lost in six games. "Tell the fans we really tried and I'm sorry. I really tried."

Dragic thanked a long list of people for their involvement in his career, including David Stern and Adam Silver—the NBA's two commissioners during his tenure—along with coaches, team executives and his agents Rade Filipovich and Bill Duffy.

"All good things come to an end but this dream of basketball will always be with me," Dragic said.

Knicks trade RJ Barrett, Immanuel Quickley to Raptors for OG Anunoby

NEW YORK (AP)—The New York Knicks traded RJ Barrett and Immanuel Quickley to the Toronto Raptors on Saturday and got back OG Anunoby, dealing two of their top offensive players but likely getting a boost to their defense with last season's NBA leader in steals.

The Knicks also acquired Precious Achiuwa and Malachi Flynn, while sending the Raptors a 2024 second-round pick belonging to Detroit.

The deal, which sends Barrett to his hometown team, left both clubs short-handed for their games Saturday night. The Raptors lost in Detroit, where the Pistons snapped their NBA record-tying losing streak at 28 games, while the Knicks fell in Indiana.

"Immanuel is a young, talented playmaker who we believe will provide a spark on both ends of the court. RJ is a versatile wing who is, of course, well-known in his hometown, and seeing him in a Raptors uniform will be a special moment for our fans and for all Canadians," Toronto vice chairman and president Masai Ujiri said in a statement.

"It's never easy to say goodbye, especially when players like OG and Malachi have spent their careers with our team. We wish Precious, Malachi and OG all the best."

The deal comes four months after the Knicks filed a lawsuit against the Raptors, alleging they had conspired to steal thousands of videos and other scouting secrets after hiring a former Knicks scouting employee.

Anunoby figures to step right into Barrett's forward spot in the Knicks' starting lineup. The 6-foot-7 swingman is averaging 15.1 points and had his highest-scoring game of the season when the Raptors visited the Knicks on Dec. 11, scoring 29 points.

"OG's complete offensive game and ability to defend multiple positions will enhance our team on both ends of the court," Knicks president Leon Rose said.

Barrett averages 18.2 points but has struggled lately with his outside shot, going 2 for 12 from 3-point range over the last two games. The No. 3 pick in the 2019 draft helped the Knicks reach the playoffs twice in the last three seasons after missing them the previous seven.

Quickley was the runner-up for the Sixth Man of the Year award last season, but there has been speculation he could be moved since the Knicks declined to give him a contract extension before this season. They will have to replace his 15 points per game off the bench and ability to play both guard positions.

"RJ and Immanuel both began their professional careers in Knicks uniforms and their contributions both on and off the court have had a great impact on this city and organization," Rose added.

Oft-injured Sale traded to Braves from Red Sox for infielder Grissom

ATLANTA (AP)—Chris Sale's injury-filled career with the Red Sox ended Saturday when the 34-year-old left-hander accepted a trade to the Atlanta Braves that sent infielder Vaughn Grissom to Boston.

Boston also is giving cash to the Braves, covering a portion of the $27.5 million salary the seven-time All-Star is owed in 2024, the final guaranteed season of a $160 million, six-year contract. That 2024 salary includes $10 million deferred until June 30, 2039.

Sale was acquired by Boston from the Chicago White Sox in December 2016. He has made nine trips to the disabled and injured lists with the Red Sox, mostly due to shoulder and elbow ailments. He had Tommy John surgery on March 30, 2020, and returned to a big league mound on Aug. 14, 2021.

He was 6-5 with a 4.30 ERA in 20 starts and 102 2/3 innings last season.

"The last few years he's obviously had some IL time," Braves general manager Alex Anthopoulos said. "You can't run from that. You realize that. But we feel like this is the first normal offseason he'll have had in a long time. But at the same time, look, he's coming off 100 innings pitched last year."

AP

Boston Red Sox starting pitcher Chris Sale pitches during the first inning of a baseball game against the Washington Nationals at Nationals Park, Thursday, Aug. 17, 2023, in Washington.

Sale helped the Red Sox to a World Series title in 2018 but has made just 56 starts in the last four years, going 17-18 with a 4.86 ERA. He had 400 strikeouts and 79 walks in 298 1/3 innings.

"Any time you trade someone like Sale, who has made such a meaningful contribution to this organization and was obviously an incredibly important part of a World Series-winning team, is a really, really tough, tough decision," Red Sox chief baseball officer Craig Breslow said.

Aside from arm issues, Sale fractured a rib while pitching in batting practice in February 2022 during the management lockout. In his second start back he broke his left pinkie finger on July 17 when he was hit by a line drive off the bat of the New York Yankees' Aaron Hicks. Sale broke his right wrist while riding a bicycle en route to lunch on Aug. 6, ending his season.

He went 46-30 with a 3.27 ERA in 115 starts with the Red Sox, making the All-Star team in his first two seasons. Sale has a 120-80 career record with a 3.10 ERA, 2,189 strikeouts and 416 walks in 1,780 2/3 innings.

"We really like his ability. We love the makeup and the person and what he brings to our clubhouse," Anthopoulos said. "We think when he's out on the mound, he's a playoff-caliber starter."

As a 10-year veteran who spent the past five seasons with his team, Sale had the right to refuse any trade.

He joins a Braves rotation projected to include Spencer Strider, Max Fried and Charlie Morton. Anthopoulos said Bryce Elder and Reynaldo López are among the candidates for the No. 5 slot.

Boston appears thin on starting pitching, with right-handers Bryan Bello, Kutter Crawford and Tanner Houck among the best current options. The Red Sox made the trade one day after agreeing to a $38.5 million, two-year contract with right-hander Lucas Giolito, a deal subject to a successful physical.

The 22-year-old Grissom has a .287 average with five homers and 27 RBIs over 64 games with Atlanta during the past two seasons and is subject to six seasons of club control. He made 41 starts at second base and 19 at shortstop.

Breslow views Grissom as Boston's everyday second baseman.

"A pretty elite track record of performance in the upper minor leagues and even to some degree in the big leagues," Breslow said. "At 22 years old, we still think that there's power to come."

Yamamoto joins Dodgers, vows to compete for titles alongside Ohtani

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Just over six years after Yoshinobu Yamamoto watched a playoff game from the raucous Dodger Stadium stands and decided he absolutely had to play in the major leagues one day, the right-hander pulled on his white No. 18 jersey and a blue cap in the center field pavilion.

The consensus best pitcher outside North America reached one of his goals Wednesday, joining the Dodgers on a 12-year contract that's reportedly the largest and longest ever guaranteed to a major league pitcher.

But the 25-year-old ace of Japan's top league won't be satisfied without many chances to experience the Los Angeles playoff atmosphere he absorbed as a teenager watching Kenta Maeda on the mound at Chavez Ravine in 2017.

While he plays alongside Shohei Ohtani with his star-studded new club, Yamamoto also intends to inspire any dreaming youngsters in the Dodger Stadium stands.

"From today moving forward, I promise to all the fans of LA that I will focus my everything to become a better player, and to become a world champion as a member of the Dodgers," Yamamoto said through his interpreter. "I will stop simply admiring the players that I have looked up to, but rather strive to become the player that others want to become."

Yamamoto has been Japan's most dominant pitcher over the past few seasons, and he was coveted by teams across the majors after he elected to leave the Orix Buffaloes this offseason.

The big-budget, pitching-poor Dodgers landed Yamamoto to cap their prolific winter spending spree after signing two-way AL MVP Ohtani to a $700 million contract and inking right-hander Tyler Glasnow to a $136.5 million, five-year deal after his acquisition from Tampa Bay.

"This has been a monumental offseason for all of us," manager Dave Roberts said. "It's a privilege to be here, but I don't think the expectations have changed. The roster has been bolstered with some good young players, but our goal is always to compete for championships."

The Dodgers have big expectations for Yamamoto, a 5-foot-10 right-hander with the potential to become a major league ace after a stellar start to his career in Japan. The Dodgers didn't disclose the value of the deal, but several media reports have tagged it at $325 million.

ALLIANA'S

From page 20

some sort of advantage over the other, and it was evident in their gameplay throughout the semis.

It was a close scoring first quarter, as the Legends hung on with a 2-point, 16-14 lead. Jimboy Tabora and Jun Tabora were a duo to be reckoned with in the first two quarters with drives and field goals that summed the first half with 17 total points.

However, the Guardians tipped the favor slightly to their side with a 3-point, 32-29 score at the end of the third quarter.

The Guardians' Jomari Dela Cruz took care of the 3-point zone, while Manuel Gatbunton rallied from the inside to try to take the win all the way home, but the last minutes of the game was marred with crucial free throws to a once again leading Legends.

Both Taboras went back-to-back-to-back from the free throw line and came away with the win by a nine-point deficit.

Gatbunton put up 17 points, followed by Dela Cruz' 15, and Jerome Directo's and Jann Godoy's 10 markers each. Legend's Jimboy Tabora scored 20, while Jun Tabora was right behind with 19 points.

First Game

Alliana's 78 – Meriales 21, Tengco 13, Mendoza 11, Broncano 10, Alcantara 9, Leightly 5, Juandale 4, Armas 3, Kenichi 2.

Bourbon Street Bar & Cafe 58 – Binuya 10, Narciso 10, Manansala 9, Jose 8, Guinhawa 6, Esmores 2, Francisco 2, Lopez 2.

Scoring by quarters: 20-14, 41-33, 60-44, 78-58.

Second Game

Legends 75 – Jimboy Tabora 20, Jun Tabora 19, Tibayan 11, P. Tabora 10, Ege 9, JM Tabora 3, Discartin 2, Zapata 1.

Guardians 64 – Gatbunton 17, Dela Cruz 15, Directo 10, Godoy 10, George 5, Villocero 5, Gonzalez 2.

Scoring by quarters: 16-14, 29-32, 54-48, 75-64.

JIMIN

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when he and his partner Siddarth Reddy beat a Division 3 nationally ranked top 20 doubles team.

The 19-year-old, however, will have to put his college studies and NCAA tennis career on hold for a bit as he will not be playing next season to serve in the Korean military for 1 1/2 years.

His advice for would be student-athletes pining to play in college, "A tip would be to just don't be afraid to email coaches."

Woo is the son of Kyungja Hwang and Bongchun Woo and his older sister, Melody, attends Yonsei University.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI's Jimin Woo with doubles partner Jacob Wachs.

According to the internet, Ithaca College is a private college in Ithaca, New York. It was founded by William Egbert in 1892 as a conservatory of music and is set against the backdrop of the city of Ithaca (which is separate from the town), outside Cayuga Lake, waterfalls, and gorges.

Ithaca College is known for the Roy H. Park School of Communications. The college has a liberal arts focus, and offers several pre-professional programs, along with some graduate programs.

O'SULLIVAN

From page 20

mer and achieve new PB's."

Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. said that the new course is what they'll be sticking to now for their future end of the year races as it's much safer and more runner friendly.

He thanked the Northern Marianas Athletics, volunteers, officials, and all the runners that came out. "I know it's pretty hard to wake up on a holiday eve morning where you want to sleep in. But, thank you guys so much for taking the time to come out and run our shortest and fastest race of the entire year," he said.

He added, "congratulations to Jody O'Sullivan for making the record under a five-minute mile. Now if anybody wants to break the new course record, they have to run faster than 4:59. If anybody wants to break the course record, on Beach Road or Marianas Resort, they have to beat Keith Ketola's time set in 2022 of 4:14." Dela Cruz then thanked *Saipan Tribune* and *Marianas Variety* for the coverage.

To check out the runners' times, click https://results.onetime.sport/activities/event/995cf799-07a5-449d-9210-bdbf91b49677.

Jackson leads Ravens in rout of Dolphins to clinch AFC top seed.

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Sports

Oft-injured Sale traded to Braves from Red Sox for infielder Grissom.

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O'Sullivan, Chavez first to run from '23

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Chef Jody O'Sullivan and student-athlete Andrei Kaithlyn Chavez ran away from 2023 the fastest during Run Saipan's Run from 2023 Mile Race on New Year's Eve last Sunday.

O'Sullivan set the inaugural course record at 4:59 for the new course that spanned the newly paved Industrial Road in front of the Gov. Eloy S. Inos Peace Park in Puerto Rico to the entrance to the Smiling Cove Marina.

Chavez was first in the women's division with a time of 5:56. Second went to Ann Bang at 7:15 and Shiela Mabutas was third at 7:58.

Second to O'Sullivan was Pony Tang at 5:07 and third was Kosuke Sato who clocked in at 5:14.

This is one of a few Run Saipan races with a prams/stroller age divisions, with Anastasiia and Alexander "Sasha" Dela Cruz claiming the stroller division with a time of 9:49.

The 14U boys first place went to Eamon Tang at 6:18 and Victor Neil Santos was second at 6:40.

The 18U division went to Rex Pixley at 5:17; second was Victor Nash Santos with a time of 5:25; and third was Simon Tang at 5:35.

The 19-34 age group Top 3 were Simon Necesito at 7:35; Kurt Songsong with 7:38; and Ricky Santiago at 8:28.

The 50-54 men's age group was a close race between James Abuy and Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero. Abuy overtook Deleon Guerrero in the last meters of the race to claim first at 7:40 and Deleon Guerrero settled for second at 7:40.1.

Chiharu Sato was the lone runner for the women's 50-54 age group who came in with a time of 8:21, and Cary Bertoncini was the only runner in the 55-59 and came in at 7:08.

O'Sullivan said that he runs the course all the time as he lives nearby and said that the race was great. "The race was good fun. Of course, there was a strong tailwind, so that helped an enormous amount," he said.

With the new course record under his belt, he said he hopes to defend the title next year.

Chavez said of the new course, "The course was actually nice and fun. It was flat and a bit downhill too. I was leading the whole time so I just told myself to squeeze the gap between the guys in front. It was honestly a great way to end the year with an early 1-mile race because it was quick and short."

LEIGH GASES

Jody O'Sullivan set the inaugural course record in the Run from '23 Mile Race on New Year's Eve last Sunday from the course that spanned the newly paved Industrial Road in front of the Gov. Eloy S. Inos Peace Park in Puerto Rico to the Smiling Cove Marina.

LEIGH GASES

Andrei Kaithlyn Chavez runs to the finish line first in the women's division of the Run from '23 Mile Race on New Year's Eve last Sunday at the Smiling Cove Marina.

She then thanked people behind the scenes "for making tons of competitive races this year." As for her sports and competitive goals in 2024, she said, "Since soccer has less competitions next year, I'm looking forward to focusing more on running and hopefully compete in the races happening during the sum-

See O'SULLIVAN on Page 19

Alliana's, Team Legends to vie for B League champs

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Alliana's and Team Legends are the last teams standing in the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League.

Alliana's claimed the first finals spot after they swept the floor with Bourbon Bar & Café, 78-58, while Legends wiped out the Guardians, 75-64, last Thursday at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

The Guardians and Bourbon Bar & Cafe will duke it out for third place this Wednesday, Jan. 3, 6pm with the championship game to follow after.

LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Alliana's Jobert Meriales goes up for layup during one of their games in the Pacific Saipan Inc. Promo Invitational Basketball League at the Gualo Rai Basketball Court.

Alliana's put up the better fight against Bourbon as they whooped them into a drunken stupor by the start of the second half.

Bourbon wasn't too far away at the end of the second quarter, 33-41, but Alliana's broke down their defense to almost nothing with back-to-back three-pointers and fast-break conversions after half-time.

In the blink of an eye, the 8-point Alliana's lead turned into a 16-point deficit by the fourth quarter. It was thanks to Meriales who led the team with his 21 markers, while Tengco gave 13 points, and Richard Mendoza scored 11.

For Bourbon, Marlon Binuya gave it all he got with 19 points, while July Narciso scored 10, and Paul Manansala put up nine.

The Legends went through the wringer against the Guardians as both teams engaged in a point-scoring tug-of-war. Both teams have faced off a few times in the league and expected

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Jimin also playing collegiate tennis

By MARK RABAGO
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EDITOR

Former CNMI No. junior netter Jimin Woo is the latest local tennis player plying his trade in the NCAA as he's currently playing in the men's tennis varsity team of Ithaca College, a Division 3 school.

"I made varsity a few months before I went to college. I did not plan to play college tennis when I was applying to school, but one of the schools that I wanted to go to had a decent team that I could make so I emailed the coach and he liked my videos and recruited me," said the clinical health studies major.

Woo, who finished his first season with the Bombers with a singles record of 2-8 and a doubles record of 6-8, said so far he's been managing studying in college and playing NCAA tennis at the same time.

"Balancing sports and academics have been pretty easy for me because tennis relaxes my mind and keeps my time management on check. We train five times a week for two hours a day."

Woo said his most memorable game so far in his two years of college tennis was

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI's Jimin Woo in action for Ithaca College, an NCAA Division 3 school.